

Inuit Sea Ice Use and Occupancy project



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Inuit Sea Ice Use and Occupancy Project (ISIUOP)

Summary

The Inuit Sea Ice Use and Occupancy Project (ISIUOP) is a collaborative project investigating the importance, uses, and knowledge of sea ice from the perspective of northern communities and Inuit experts.



Team in Clyde River mapping local trails

ISIUOP built on previous sea ice research in Nunavut and Nunavik communities (for the past 4 - 8 years), and worked to further document and map local sea ice expertise. Conventional maps show terrestrial variations and features in great detail, while water bodies are outlined and left "blank." Therefore, inspired by the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project of 1976, ISIUOP undertook collaborative investigations to:

- Document and map sea ice conditions, uses, and hazards;

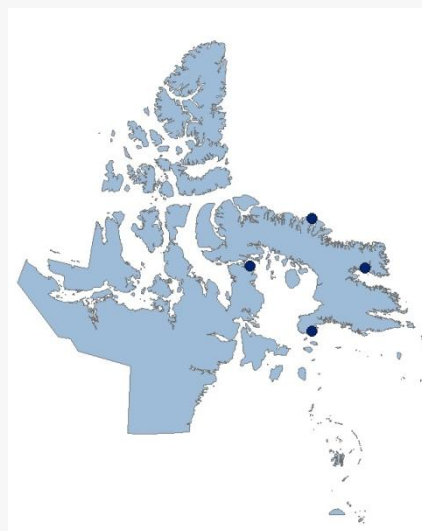
- Evaluate Sea ice changes (and local impacts of change) over time;
- Investigate new technologies to map and/or represent the dynamic ice environment;
- Develop community-based monitoring/ice safety programs or materials; and,
- Develop educational materials for Inuit youth, researchers, and governments.

We have addressed these objectives through four sub-projects: i) Mapping Inuit Sea Ice Knowledge and Use; ii) Igliniit; iii) Nunavik communities and ice: Environmental change and community safety; and, iv) multi-media educational materials and online atlas development.

Outcomes of the project include: multiple book chapters and journal articles in special collections focused on Inuit knowledge of sea ice, new technologies for community-based monitoring of sea ice, new data management practices to support the collection, preservation, and sharing of Inuit knowledge, an expansion of the Floe Edge Service (providing satellite imagery of sea ice to northern communities), and an online, interactive, multi-media educational Atlas of Inuit sea ice knowledge and use:

<http://sikuatlas.ca>

Location



Collaborations

ISIUOP is a collaborative effort between northern community members and organizations, as well as Inuit organizations, various levels of government, academics, and private industry. In northern communities we worked with key local researchers, and partnered with local Hamlet Councils, Hunters and Trappers Organizations, schools, and research or heritage centres. We also had support from regional, territorial, and national Inuit organizations, as well as territorial and federal governments.

Questions session

Below we are asking a few questions in order to demonstrate how research results can be used by policy and decisions-makers in terms of community and climate change adaptation planning in the Eastern Canadian Arctic.

1) What types and sources of scientific data does your program use to inform policy/decision making?

We rely mainly on the knowledge of Inuit elders and hunters in terms of learning about sea ice from northern and Inuit perspectives. However, we also have a strong technological component to the project, relying on instrumental data from GPS units, weather stations, ice thickness measurements, and satellite imagery.

We work with both forms of knowledge creation in a complementary manner, to try to gain the most comprehensive understanding of ice conditions, uses, and changes in a context relevant to northern community members. However, we also seek to translate these results into findings that can be used at a regional scale, which could help to inform local, regional or territorial decision-making. We have not yet made specific policy recommendations, but we have contributed to policy development in relation to education, community-based environmental monitoring, and data management.

2) How does your organization linked with knowledge produced by ArcticNet science and/or others?

ISIUOP was funded through the International Polar Year Canadian federal science program, as well as supplementary funds from various government departments. We were not supported by ArcticNet, and thus have not been directly involved in network activities, although we regularly attend ArcticNet ASMs to communicate our findings and build partnerships.

3) Can you identify knowledge gaps from your organization's perspective?

The ongoing challenge for us, and others, is how to effectively learn from, incorporate, and apply knowledge from Inuit and scientific experts in a way that is complementary. This has been a goal for us, and we have several examples where this has worked well. But, there are always more questions that arise, always improvements to be made, and true collaborations are a very long term process that we continue to strive for and learn from.

A related challenge is the communication of research results in ways that can be used for policy- and decision-making, and not only at territorial or federal levels, but especially for the northern communities with whom we work. Much research is conducted across the North, and ensuring that results are available, understandable, and useful in supporting Hamlets or regional Inuit organizations in making decisions is an area that still needs much attention.

Contact information

Contact us if you have feedback or questions.

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