

"After the Ice" captures voices from the changing Bering Sea

A new series of mini-documentaries tells stories of Indigenous communities immensely challenged by sea-ice loss in Alaska's Bering Sea, with lessons for us all.

The series paints an emotional picture of people who depend on sea ice for their traditional ways of life, and are watching it vanish before their eyes. They report seeing fewer and unfamiliar birds and marine mammals. They describe pulling in nets stinking with dead salmon, likely spoiled by unusually warm water.

"I fear not for myself but for our future generations," said Elder Jerry Ivanoff, a Unalakleet resident whose story was featured in the series. "The lack of ice, the lack of snow, has an effect on the animals and the fish that we depend on to live."

"These Indigenous communities have storytelling as a core component to their culture, so they are just really powerful partners in communicating what we're observing as scientists and furthermore what they're experiencing as communities, as families and individual hunters," said Dr. Matthew Druckenmiller, a research scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center, University of Alaska-Fairbanks alumnus and co-lead on the project.

The series also documents hope.

Nick Hanson, a Unalakleet resident who competed in the TV series *American Ninja Warrior*, said young people are building homes at higher elevations, safe from winter storms that cause coastal flooding and erosion.

"Our ancestors, the Iñupiat people, they had to adapt and overcome every single day," Hanson said in the video.

Eli Kintisch, the writer and producer, said he aimed to connect big global climate trends to individual stories, set to the backdrop of spectacular Arctic landscapes.

"After the Ice" is a three-part series funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation to the Study of Environmental Arctic Change (SEARCH), a multi-disciplinary effort directed by Dr. Brendan Kelly of the University of Alaska Fairbanks International Arctic Research Center. View them at AfterTheIce.org

SEARCH sea-ice scientists partnered with the Bering Sea Elders Group, an association of Alaska Native elders appointed by 39 Iñupiat and Yup'ik tribes in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Bering Strait region, to create the videos.

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Photo by Mwita Chacha The community of Fort Davis, Alaska, lies on the Bering Sea coast just east of Nome. This region is experiencing the impacts of dramatic sea ice loss.