

SECTION IV

EPILOGUE

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Our colleague, Herbert O. Anungazuk, passed away on August 24, 2010, before he could see his words in print in this volume. His paper, "The Many Faces of Displacement" presented at the Displaced Peoples of Alaska symposium in Juneau in 2009, serves as the epilogue for the special issue portion of this volume. Herbert, an Iñupiaq from Wales, Alaska, was a well known and highly respected cultural anthropologist with the National Park Service (NPS). He was also an extremely talented writer and orator, much sought after as a presenter at professional conferences. Born into a traditional community of bowhead whalers and trained as a hunter, he continued his education in Sitka, graduating from Mount Edgecumbe High School and then attending Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. In 1968, he was drafted into the army and served honorably for two years in Vietnam. After the war, Herbert remained connected with his Vietnam brothers.

Herbert was employed by the NPS Alaska Region beginning in 1985, and he worked for NPS until the time of his death. An early position was that of Native liaison and heritage specialist. Beginning in 2003, he worked as a cultural anthropologist for the Cultural Resources Team at the Alaska Regional Office in Anchorage. His knowledge of Iñupiaq language and the history of the Bering Straits communities, and his training by the elders of his community as an Iñupiaq hunter and whaler, facilitated his work as an anthropologist.

He frequently worked in partnership with other anthropologists and scientists conducting research in

Iñupiaq communities. Herbert worked with an amazing list of scholars, including Barbara Bodenhorn, Ernest S. "Tiger" Burch, Jr., Hajo Eicken, Susan W. Fair, Craig Gerlach, Evgeniy Golovko, Roger Harritt, Julie Hollowell, David Hopkins, Carol Zane Jolles, Deanna Kingston, Igor Krupnik, Mary Ann Larsen, Allen McCartney, Peter Schweitzer, and Laura Zanotti. Herbert worked with many within the National Park Service, but especially with Jeanne Schaaf and Donald Callaway. He was not only instrumental, but invaluable, in work conducted in northern Alaska, particularly on the Seward Peninsula.

Within the broader Iñupiaq community, Herbert was sought out for his deep knowledge of kinship connections throughout the Bering Strait region and beyond. He was a major contributor to the *Wales Sea Ice Dictionary*. One of his last projects was to develop a more comprehensive Wales Iñupiaq dictionary, and he had added 4,000 entries by the time of his death. Wherever he went, he took his small green pocket notebook with him. Over the years he filled many of these with kinship connections, words, and any information that might contribute to preserving the history and culture of Iñupiaq people. Because of Herbert's long service and significant contribution to Alaska anthropology, he was presented with the Alaska Anthropological Association's Professional Achievement Award in 2010.

Herbert is deeply missed by his colleagues at the National Park Service, by his large and loving family, and by an enormous circle of friends.

THE MANY FACES OF DISPLACEMENT

Herbert Anungazuk

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In the early 1970s the boat crew I was a member of took a researcher who wanted to gather samples and temperature readings from various depths in the waters of the Bering Strait. We took him a mile offshore from shorefast sea ice. The researcher got the information for his research but came away quite confused at the readings he obtained. He was confused why the water was so “warm.” Was this the beginning of the winds of change related to climate change? Was this one of the signs that something was running amok in the sea? Signs of change may have started fifty, seventy years ago or even earlier, according to the stories that related to adverse weather occurring beyond the norm. Stories tell of unseasonably savage storms that dumped tons of snow into the community of Wales; this period is orally documented with the harvest of a bowhead calf in which my uncle (born in 1928), just months old, was given a strip of baleen from the tiny whale as his share. The late 1950s also had strange weather happenings. It was in mid-winter 1958, perhaps, that we had a southeaster that hovered in the strait for an extended period with temperatures in the forties. Tons of ice and snow became snowmelt that gathered in the lowlands of the shore belt. The hardiest of plants, the stink weed or wormwood, began shooting out of the ground. Seagulls and various marine birds, pintails and other avian species came in anticipation of an early spring but disappeared when the winter freeze returned. This became a time of pure happiness for children as the whole coast and lowlands became a skating rink.

Climatic changes have altered the lives of the hunters in many ways. The arrival and departure of sea ice, once expected at almost a precise time, year after year, has fluctuated dramatically, and the noticeable changes have affected hunter success among hunter-gatherer nations. How does sea ice apply to the hunter-gatherer? So much of what the hunter must learn applies to sea ice. The signs that the ice offers are numerous and the clues must be learned and taught by the elders so that the hunters will return safely home. Worry and the possible pain

of loss are present in the world of the northern people as they face the possibilities of displacement from tidal action of fall storms that have begun to erode arctic coastlines. Storms increased in frequency and intensity and noticeable changes were observed in higher tides or extreme surf that grinds away at shorelines. It was then that you began to hear terms like *sila at-unoqtug* or “the weather has changed” uttered by the elders. Adverse changes in weather patterns became very noticeable to residents at least three decades ago.

The northwesternmost part of the North American continent north of Cape Prince of Wales has sandy beaches providing a low-lying coast with ever-shifting sands. Coastal people, regardless of which nationality they represent or traditions of survival they pursue, will have identical aims as their lifestyles follow a seasonal norm. The Bering Strait is on the crosshairs of storms bred in the Bering Sea as the narrow funnel of water pulls tropical depressions that wander above the North Pacific past the Aleutian Islands. Storms savage in intensity announce their arrival with a black narrow cloud lining the horizon. The winds arrive within hours and can last several days. Natural catastrophes of various types have occurred among hunter-gatherer societies that threatened the very structure of their societies since the far distant past. Severe storms, war, or times of famine will require decisions that people must move for the safety of their families, their people, and their total well-being, thus adding guarantee of survival for themselves.

Oceanic waves do not always erode unstable beaches. The wind from a precise direction will add to coastline, beach ridge by beach ridge, which through time can anchor firmly a new coast. Such activity is continually observed by the people so as time permits the people can move ever closer to the sea as the formation of land appears permanently set.

With specific tidal action water between sandbars becomes exceedingly deep. The coastal waters once

experienced extreme low tides in the fall during my youth. Such activity, if it occurs frequently, can cause the formation of additional beach ridges. The formation of beach ridges may not happen quickly, but as time passes trapped water becomes ponds and lakes. Fast-growing weeds trap windblown sand and dust that over time separate lakes and ponds and also form countless small islands that are ideal for nesting birdlife. Beach ridges show the passage of time through their numbers. The ridges farthest from the sea show evidence of ancient human habitation. How far into the sea do the ridges go, and how vast was the land before the lowlands became the Bering Strait? Storms, like serene seas and skies, are a part of the drama of environment. The land may have disappeared into the purging waters but its presence remains as sand bars or shallow shoals that today retain the names given them by the people.

The Arctic and Subarctic are a part of the kingdom of the hunter-gatherer. The hunter must continually analyze his surroundings from all different points and be willing to take positions based on what would be most beneficial for everyone. His realm includes the ice, which has provided for the well-being of the people since dawn immemorial. Sea ice is an integral part of the lives of indigenous people; thus it is not a small part of their lives. The short summer is long awaited after a winter of wind, ice, and snow. Winter is never a dormant season as the season provides ample time to build or repair equipment for the spring harvest that is soon to arrive. Summer is a time of intense activity; new homes, boats, sleds, and hunting equipment must be built during the short comforts of summer while the women gather the gifts of the land. Loss of equipment can prevent movement of people, as from a permanent location to traditional gathering areas, until losses have been replaced or equipment may be loaned between family or members of hunting crews. Indigenous people live within a seasonal round. Plants, roots and berries may grow in all parts of the land, but their growth depends on a good summer growing season. Heavy snow conditions have been used in predicting a successful summer's growth for berries. Life in the far north is to understand who you are and where you must live. Our communities rest along the flyways, byways and mountain game trails that became gateways to survival to the indigenous people of the land. During the summer the men hunted game of opportunity and fished.

Arctic and subarctic areas can be subject to adverse weather of the most severe nature, and the people of the seacoast, the islands and capes have memories of them;

storms of ferocious intensity are becoming more frequent during the winter months. Beginning in recent decades noticeable changes in weather patterns started to be observed by the hunters and certain communities became imbedded in the limelight of concern because existing beaches are losing ground to wave action, thus endangering life and property. In the Arctic and Subarctic many communities are situated along coastal shores of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas. To have an understanding of where the people must live you need to know about the land and its people, and you must probe into the deepest depths of how they must live.

Displacement is not a new term, as the term now implies in the vocabulary of many people whose lives are being intermingled with change in weather patterns not comparable in magnitude to the changes that occurred in the past. It is understandable that the mammals, birds, and fish are more adaptable to change and it is not our course to change in the manner that they can, but to ever retreat to higher ground. Our ancestors have always followed retreating waters near choice movement areas of prey; we have always pursued our prey to be nearer to them. Loss of harvest potential because of changes of migration patterns of sea mammals can result in severe shortages of winter staples.

We owe eternal gratitude to our ancestors for our successes in continuing to reside in the environment chosen by them. Cold and warmth are two elements we have learned to contend with over the countless generations that the people have lived upon the land. In or near coastal communities you will see abandoned *inipiat*, or semisubterranean houses, now collapsed and reclaimed by the earth, and the oral history of the people tells of villages that were moved to higher ground to flee rising seas; no evidence whatsoever remains of former communities that have been reclaimed by the sea. Our land carries strong ethnic traditions; our language comes from the earth through our association with our beliefs and lifeways. In the very recent past the people held the birthright of language within them, but that value is being shoved to the wayside, marked into possible oblivion by progress. The language comes from the land and the instructions of survival that will come from the land may not be understood when dire circumstances begin to prevail because of the adverse effects of climatic change. Oral history is living history, and the people learned very early how to abide by its truth. My father would state, "It's the true" when he made special emphasis of what had proven very important in his life. He and many other elders have been very special teachers

to us. They related continually of ancient times and of special periods of our people's unwritten history that continue to enhance our daily lives today.

Depths of erosion over the eons are not known, but it must have been massive over time, because the oral history of coastal people tells of former villages now tens or hundreds of feet below present sea levels. The oral histories of Wales and Little Diomedes tell about the land and the sea. Our land and sea take care of us as a mother would her child. The signature of the sea can change almost instantaneously, as from the serene slumber of calmness to an astounding fury of wind-driven and current-challenged whitecaps. The sea is as ancient as the land. The mammals and fish have more rights to residency in the sea than we do because they are a part of the sea as we became a part of the land. The mammals, birds, and fish are not continually present in our waters because they are ever on the move, season to forthcoming season. The mammals know who we are as much as we believe we know them; they shy away from us as if we own the sea.

Each village is a nation to her own. We adhere to our language and dialects and profess ourselves to be people of a specific place. We are people of place. Winters are cold and can be severe or deadly for the unprepared, and for eons storms have been a part of our lives. One of the most pleasant memories of any person is to reminisce about youth and early adult years. The first time when a hunter harpoons a whale is a special moment in the life of a hunter that never fades from memory. These are special moments that the hunter, his family, and the people remember. It is not only once in our lives that we remember our encounters with our Mother Earth or the sea; we remember the encounters always because we live them. Our encounters with reality are us; it is us. We have lived with reality since the moment we came to remember who we are.

Among hunter- and warrior-class societies, warfare can be a constant threat from adversaries of ancient standing. Many nations have protocol and follow specific instruction in the event a raid surprised the people. The Kingikmiut, or people of Wales, were especially vigilant as traditional enemies were just across the water from them. War commanders closely supervised warriors constantly to avert the possibility of surprise and the event of being displaced in the event of a rout. The *inuqshuq* [pl. *inuksuit*] or stone men and upright stone spires imitate sentries along mountain tops, thus alleviating some element of surprise.

The ancient occupation of the hunter still prevails among indigenous people. Sadly it is an occupation that is the most regulated among all others in the world today and very much more so in arctic lands. Regulations to harvest sea mammals and migratory birds were imposed upon people when and only when game resources were within the ample harvest range of people. The authorities did not realize that prey species are available to us only during a specific season, and allowed hunting after most species returned to wintering grounds far from the reach of the hunters. One of the recent prophecies stated by our elders past was that the days of what is referred to as easy living will pass and that the people will have to revert to the ancient ways of survival founded by our ancestors.

Year-round opportunities are limited in hunter-gatherer communities, thus lack of jobs has been the cause of movement to urban communities where jobs may be found. The ratio of hunters in a small community is exceedingly high. Most indigenous people have a lifetime of hunter-gatherer experience before being displaced to urban areas in varying ways, so a hunter will have great difficulty in finding employment that may match his life experiences among strange societies who have no place for people with hunting experiences only.

As a young child I became aware of some communities having many more elders than the elders we had in Wales. This was especially noticeable when the people of Little Diomedes Island landed briefly in Wales going to summer camps in Nome or Kotzebue. Then again in the fall of 1958 my father took us to establish camps north of Wales. The trip, by *omiak* [or *umiak*; i.e., skin-covered boat], included a stop in Shishmaref to replenish supplies we had expended. This trip allowed my father to barter walrus skins he had for any items that may not be available in Wales. It was in Shishmaref that I saw many more elders than I have ever seen anywhere. It was later that I found that it was the elders of Shishmaref that stopped the invasion of a black, invisible, odorless death.

The influenza pandemic that circled the globe in 1918 took the lives of many people in communities throughout the north, and Wales being a community almost solely inhabited by Inupiat with no immunity to infectious diseases, people succumbed by the hundreds. The young men and women, many with young and adolescent children, died, thus my father's generation is largely a generation of orphans. The very young and the generations of grandparents survived, although many of them also became gravely

ill. Several newborn infants died when dying mothers could no longer care for their babies. Many of my generation experienced life never feeling the loving embrace of a grandfather or grandmother.

It became known that the children whose parents died in the pandemic were to be taken away to orphanages established in several places throughout the Seward Peninsula. Wales was very likely approached on this heinous subject but surviving elders decided that the children would not be taken away when it became apparent that helpless children must be cared for in the best way possible. Many and sometimes most capable adults in surrounding communities died, and the people averted displacing the orphans by taking them as their own. My father was raised by an elderly couple whom he thought were his natural parents until he was told. Two older siblings were raised by an aunt in Teller, where an older brother died and an older sister married and raised a family.

The transfer of traditional knowledge to the young is one of trust; it is placed upon trust so that those who were taught specific functions of the culture will pass on what they have learned to those who request an answer to the many questions that form in their minds throughout their lives. Our culture is ingrained into all aspects associated with who we are as people. Culture enriches your whole being; the whole being of the people. Culture is an environment by itself as the phenomenon encompasses the people in a complete circle. Our culture is associated with the language, the land, the sea, and all of its creatures. Our association with it is ingrained into our heritage of survival. You are representative of the land and the sea as what you have been taught has been ingrained into your being so wholly that the land and the sea becomes a part of your substance.

The young people have been a catalyst in the return of traditional dances among many groups, Wales included. Interest was piqued very quickly when two special elders began teaching the arts of Eskimo dancing to the students in their spare time. After several years the community put out invitations to dance groups from surrounding communities. The invitations were well received and now the dances, held annually, have international representation with several dance groups from the Russian Far East having attended past dances. Dance groups from Point Hope, Little Diomed, and King Island have attended yearly along with several mainland groups. The younger generation's rate of absorbing information is very finely honed; their ability to learn is exceptional. Young boys and girls, tutored at a very young age in the arts of hunting and sur-

vival, become ardent supporters of the subsistence ways of life observed by the people, and the young people become exceptional writers when they employ their traditional learning to their schoolwork. Here, in part, is a short edited essay written by Raymond Seetook, Jr.:

[T]here are many reasons to support and believe in subsistence hunting. No other type of existence has been as healthy to mankind and toward the health of the earth. Subsistence living encourages each person to understand the web of life and our place in that web. As a hunter I am part of that land. It keeps me healthy in my body and soul. The prey and I are really part of each other. When I kill my prey I respect the life that I had taken and with respect I take that food to my family. As a hunter I must learn vital skills. Among those skills is knowledge of the animals I hunt. I am familiar with the thrill of the hunt and the quiet sadness comes over me when I realize I have taken the life of a living being. I know that its death allows my family to live and I am grateful for the food I get from the earth. There is no life without death. As a subsistence hunter I have had to face my own fears and I know the satisfaction of meeting nature on its own terms. I also believe that subsistence hunting provides a good example to the world which is a lesson that my ancestors knew and practiced for thousands of years. Subsistence hunting also supports strong families. The life of each member of the family depends on the actions of each member of the family. The adult male has a natural and important role in the family. He knows he is vital to the well being of his family (Seetook 2007).

Raymond finishes by stating, "He [the hunter] has true value."

The hunters reside in a position of respect within a hunter-gatherer community. The respect mounts not only within the community but among the people when he and his crew are responsible for landing a whale. Hunting is the cradle of indigenous culture; it is a part of the profound way of the people, as survival is assured with harvest success that is uniformly shared among the crews, the families, and the people.

REFERENCES

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2007 "Understanding Subsistence." *BSSD StraitTalk*, newsletter of the Bering Strait School District (BSSD). Online at blog.bssd.org/2007/11/understanding-subsistence/. Reprinted from November 2007 Kingikmiut School newsletter, Wales.



Herbert Anungazuk (1945–2010) at Bering Land Bridge National Preserve in 2008 (photo courtesy of Nancy Swanton)