Shishmaref, Alaska

Many Strong Voices MSV

"…elders tell stories from the past…"

Elders

The elders told us how to hunt. One of the elders told us they used harpoons to get seals and walrus. He also told me they used sink hooks to get the seal or walrus out of the water.

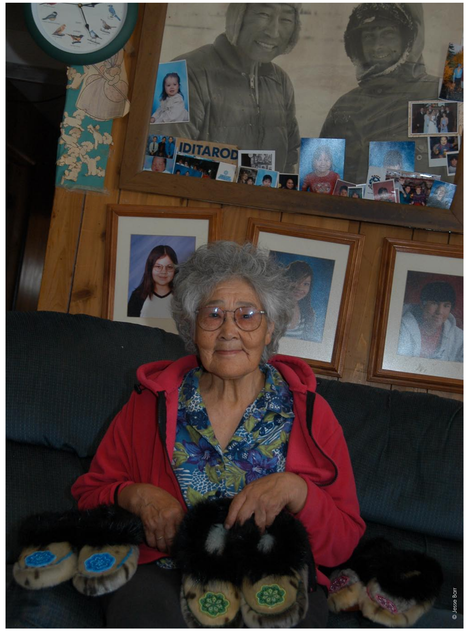
John Sinnok told the class they made sealskin boats by stretching the seal skins till they got dry. They used wooden oars to go to the mainland or would wait for a windy day. They mostly made hunting material out of wood and sometimes out of ivory. The elders knew the ice was good to cross by going on the ice and used a *tuilik* to tap on the ice a couple of times as they walked farther and farther.

I heard a lot of stories from the elders about what happened or what good hunts there were a long time ago. Most of the elders told the stories they heard from their great grandparents. The elders tell stories to younger adults and kids so they can go on for generations. The elders say they see a big change in our weather because the winter ice would stick around more a long time ago. Now it goes out early. My grandma has a picture of Shishmaref from a long time ago. There was a lot of grass but now there is mostly sand from the Hondas and snow machines. Ever since then the island began to grow smaller. There was a lot of land back then before the erosion and from climate change. It is warmer in the winter. Back then it was real cold.

There are some different birds and fish coming around to Shishmaref like the Wilson's warbler, house sparrows and different species of birds than we have here. The fish that are different are stingray and some rockfish that we catch at the channel.

Our elders know a lot about Shishmaref because elders tell stories from the past. Elders were taught how to hunt and have seen a lot of changes to our island. That's what the elders did along time ago in the past.

— Henry (Qaqazuaq) Ahgupuk



Portraits of Resilience is part of the Many Strong Voices Programme. It illustrates in a personal way what climate change means to young people in the Arctic and helps communities create their own visual archive of the changes they are experiencing. More @ www.manystrongvoices.org

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