Pangnirtung, Nunavut

Many Strong Voices MSV Arctic • Small Islands Developing States

"It was our only bridge ..."

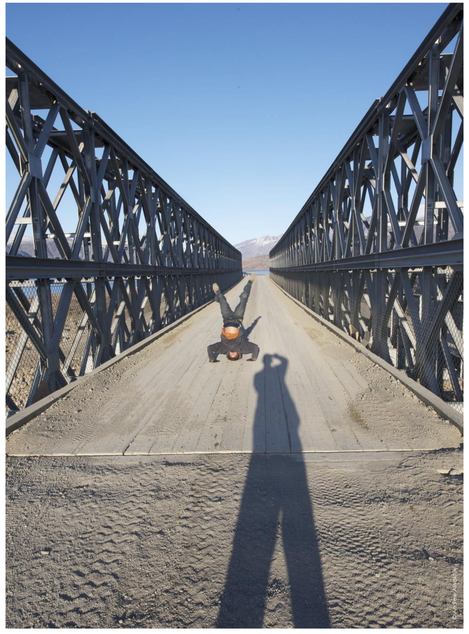
The Bridge

On June 8, 2008 there was a huge problem in Pangnirtung -- the bridges. The old bridge has been in Pangnirtung for many years. It was there when I was a little baby. Many of the things we need are delivered by truck to our houses and the source of our fresh water is on the other side of the bridge. It was our only bridge for the trucks that provide us with fresh water in our houses, take the sewage out of our homes and bring the garbage to the dump on the other side of the river.

When the permafrost began to melt, pieces of the land started to go down the river and the two bridges started to go down as well. The older one moved about 10 feet [3 metres] overnight. The newer bridge didn't move that much but we couldn't use it at all. We couldn't get any vehicles over the bridge but luckily there were some water trucks in the main part of the town. But it was really hard having to save some water to provide us with fresh water. Then bridge engineers and geotechnical experts started to come in planes but it was also hard trying to get them in because we had heavy winds.

They started to bring in the supplies for the new bridge and they started to make the bridge, and finally it was done. Pangnirtung was really a hard place to be on those days. There was no school for a bit. It was hard to provide us with fresh water and sewage was dumped into the ocean for a while. People that lived on the other side of town had a hard time going to the store to buy groceries. This is what happened in Pangnirtung last summer because of climate change. We really need to stop what we are doing to this planet.

— Danny Ishulutak



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"This harms our way life ..."

The Meltdown

About five years ago the sea ice used to take longer to melt. It lasted about 10 months but now it's only 8 months. This harms our way of life, our way of hunting, our way of fishing, and our way of traveling from one place to another. It even hurts the animals that live around the pole. Every year the snow on top gets thinner. Seal pups are easier to catch because their den is on the ice and the snow on the roof of the den is thinner. This is an example of a meltdown. Glaciers are disappearing too. One of the glaciers was melting away, but slowly. Then the melting got faster. Now in 2009 it's gone. I never thought I would see the ground but for the first time all of us here in this community, we saw the ground where the glacier was for the first time. I guess this is a result of a meltdown. Permafrost is what keeps our land together. But when it melts it breaks down. My example of a permafrost meltdown is here at home in 2008 our old bridge just collapsed and another one that was never been used went down too. Every year the permafrost melts lower and this is a result of rising temperatures.

— Charlie Nakqashuk

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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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