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“Global warming issues are here”:
Ethnography of a Motionless Relocation in Kivalina, Alaska

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Abstract

Kivalina is an old Iñupiaq summer camp located on the southern end of a barrier reef island in Northwest Alaska. The location was transformed into a colonial settlement during the early 1900s. The population and the size of the village have been growing ever since then. For the last two decades, Kivalina residents have been experiencing significant local environmental changes and hazards such as severe erosion of the island. The situation has led to administrative, political, and engineering procedures which aim to relocate the village, or part of it, to a safer place. This process, more than an isolated event in the history of the village, can be seen as a long term chain of events that stretches over the second half of the 20th century. This process has been marked by periods of advances and other ones of blockages. Each generation of relocation activists for the last fifty years had to deal with relocation. On the level of discourses, the relocation is underway, while practices' analysis shows that the village will remain on its actual location for an unknown period of time. In other words, the planning and the realization of a relocation project designed to improve living standards of Kivalina inhabitants has generated side effects. This paradox can be described as a situation of blockage, which crystalizes various representations of how the relocation should be undertaken. The current situation of the process can be described as a motionless relocation. I argue that the causes of the blockage are to be found in the individual and institutional relationships between the relocation activists composed of Kivalina leaders and residents, and the regional, state, and federal personnel involved in the relocation process. Furthermore, this work shows how climate change often thought to be the direct cause of relocation is in fact adding to existing local realities. At the end, Kivalina residents are not passive recipients of government interventions. They are rather participant actors of change.

Cover illustrations:

Left: Aerial view from Kivalina before the construction of the wall in 2008. Courtesy of Millie Hawley, Kivalina.

Right: Austin Swan Sr. Whaling Crew. Courtesy of Nelda and Austin Swan Sr., Kivalina.

The first picture gives the geographical and infrastructure context to the relocation debates. The second picture illustrates one of the local subsistence activities –whaling – a highly symbolic one for Kivalina residents, in term of identity and land uses. Subsistence activities are a central and controversial theme in the debates about relocation in Kivalina and Arctic Alaska.

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All errors in this work are my own and should not reflect upon any of the individuals with who I have worked.

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List of Abbreviations

U.S ACOE	The United States Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska Division
ANCSA	Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
GAO	U.S. Government Accountability Office
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council
IRA	Indian Reorganization Act
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KRPC	Kivalina Relocation Planning Committee
NANA	NANA Regional Corporation, Inc.
NWAB	Northwest Arctic Borough
UAF	University of Alaska Fairbanks
UNINE	University of Neuchâtel

PREFACE

The role of the ethnographer's approach, opinions, and emotions must be acknowledged as parts of the ethnographic process (Ghasarian 2004). They have their place in the final works of students and researchers. Some would argue that emotions and science have no business in common, though. However, I prefer to believe opinions and emotions are at the roots of our knowledge and contribute to its shape, along with analytical models, our reflexivity, and our understanding of social realities (Teldock 1991). Acknowledging it is even more relevant with anthropology, a discipline that constructs its knowledge from social personal interactions¹. If anthropology has perhaps become nowadays the study of social themes or subjects rather than social groups, ethnography is still about people.

This thesis is about people and has been thought of as a process of collaboration from its very beginning. When I arrived in the village of Kivalina, the people's attitude who welcomed me was unambiguous: distant, some even suspicious, but all helpful. The situation would later change radically in a positive way. At the time of my arrival, it was clear I would be able to do my work; however, no one would favorably accept intrusive attitudes. I sought to avoid as much as possible the presumptuous approach of writing a study *on* people, in my case the inhabitants of Kivalina. « We don't want to be put under a microscope » an Alaskan villager once told to Dr. William "Bill" Schneider, my oral history professor and anthropologist at the University of Alaska Fairbank (2002:20). I read this passage at an early stage of my research. It never left my mind since then and I therefore took on board and ventured out to work in collaboration *with* the persons I encountered. For instance, I tried to provide information that can be of interest for individuals that are affected by relocation, while trying to respond to scholarship exigencies in parallel. This distinction I made between *on* and *with* the people may sound like words for some, or the result of a juvenile enthusiasm following a first experience of fieldwork to others. However, I believe the distinction is an important one to draw. It distinguishes different sets of minds concerning what anthropological research in particular and social sciences in general are and should be. For me, they should be deeply rooted in the scientific tradition, meaning rigorous, critical, and honest, without however avoiding confronting themselves with the questions of emotional and social engagement (Sluka, Robben 2007:26).

¹ For Mike Crang and Ian Cook "whether it is acknowledged or not, it is important to understand that research on social relations is made out of social relations which develop within and between the multiple sites of researchers expanded field (Clifford 1997, Cook 2001; Katz 1992, 1994)" (2007 :9).

I believe that to think and to write the anthropological experience as a process of sharing is the least we can do to render the richness of what we receive when working on a local scale with members of a specific group of people. This is particularly relevant in the American Arctic where the legacy of colonization is not solely a piece of history, which finds its place in monographs and collective memories. Indeed, the history of colonization in the North has left its marks on the local inhabitants of Alaska. Decisions made by “outsiders” on behalf of villagers, is still a current practice that is only starting to change today. To avoid using similar authoritarian approaches, I believe ethnography has to acknowledge its colonial past (Pels 1997; Kilani 2009) and continue to invent new paths in which the people we work with become field partners (Crate, Nutall 2009 :9), a relationship based on mutual respect (Ghasarian 2004:8). At the end, when anthropologists enter an unfamiliar world, are they not the ones who need to learn? Anthropology left me the beautiful freedom to collaborate and share with the people who accepted me in their worlds. As Bill Schneider loves to repeat, “without them our work would not be possible.” As researchers, we need to acknowledge that. I decided to do it at the very beginning of my dissertation.



Figure 1: Bering Strait area. In green, state and federal protected lands. Source: Bing Maps, 12/29/2010.

INTRODUCTION

Encountering the Field

1. Kivalina of the North

Kivalina is an Iñupiaq village of 400 people located in Northwest Alaska 83 miles north of the Arctic Circle (see map 1, page 11). Its inhabitants live on the southern end of a 5.5-mile barrier reef island bordered on the west by the Chukchi Sea and on the east by the Kivalina Lagoon² (see appendix a, map 3). Kivalina is an old Iñupiaq summer camp that was transformed into a colonial settlement during the early 1900s. The population and the size of the village have been growing ever since then (see appendix b, illustrations 1). For the last two decades, Kivalina residents are experiencing significant local environmental changes that impact their everyday lives. One of the main environmental issues is the erosion of the island on which the village has been built. This situation has led to administrative, political, and engineering procedures which aim to relocate the village, or part of it, to a safer place. The costs of such an operation and the need for collaboration within a particularly complex Alaskan institutional landscape have generated a challenging social and political situation.



Figure 2. Aerial view of Kivalina August 2009. The new rock revetment or seawall is visible on the foreground. It was designed to protect the village from high waves and erosion.

There is a long history of relocation in Alaska due to various causes such as the building of military infrastructure, the industrial development of natural resources, and natural hazards. Along with Kivalina, several relocations, commonly presented as a direct

² The Kivalina lagoon was previously named Corwin Lagoon (Andrews 1939:1; Bureau of education archives, Kivalina Map).

results of coastal erosion and environmental hazards, are underway or in discussion in the Alaskan North, like in Newtok or Shishmaref to mention only a few cases. Most of these Alaskan coastal villages were formerly camps used on a seasonal basis. They became permanent settlements under the influence of Christian missionaries and the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs schools during the first half of the 20th century. In other words, the year-round settlement of local population is at the origin of contemporary relocation debates.

The following pages explore the relocation process of Kivalina from an ethnographic perspective. First, this reflexive introduction focuses on the research project genesis to describe how I undertook ethnographic work in Alaska. While the need to avoid the bias of introspection (Olivier de Sardan 2008: 169-182) as well as “confession ethnography” (Ghasarian, 2004: 14) is certain, I believe any ethnographic and anthropological text is weakened if “the non-scientific motivations of observation, the nature and circumstance of the interaction considered” (Ghasarian 2004:16) are not discussed and questioned. Furthermore, I understand “reflexivity as a beginning point rather than as an end to ethnography” (DeWalt, DeWalt 2011:37). Consequently, this introduction presents my work hypothesis and research questions, and explains how the topic of village relocation became a matter of anthropological interest.

The first chapter provides a historical perspective on the village’s creation and suggests that the choice of a location for a permanent settlement is one of the causes lying at the root of the contemporary relocation debates in Kivalina. The second chapter analyses a specific episode of the relocation process, the *Consensus Building Project*. This case study provides elements for the analysis of the contemporary relocation situation described as a blockage. During the realization of this project, several processual characteristics for improving the relocation planning effort were identified by villagers. In the third and the last chapter, I compared these elements to my ethnographic material and formulated main themes characterizing the processual dimension of the contemporary relocation: the relocation blockage; the research fatigue and lassitude of villagers; the relationship between individual and institutional stakeholders of the relocation process; discourses and practices related to climate change. The discussion of these themes enables us to understand how a project designed to increase living standard of Kivalina residents has led to forms of side effects such as the blockage and frustration. To conclude, I discuss one of the critical notions this fieldwork has

generated, the idea of a motionless relocation, and provide further inquiries to bridge the previous themes analysis with two main contemporary research objects: the environment and relocation.

I made my observations during three stays in the village, four month total, between July 2009 and March 2010. I spent 10 month total in Alaska. Combining direct observation, participant observation (DeWalt, DeWalt 2011), and multi-site research (Copans 2008:102-109), I attended several public community³ and council meetings which were held in Kivalina to discuss relocation as well as daily issues. I spent time with residents in the village and the tundra, and used the “anthropological art of hanging out” (Stevenson 2008:1) allowing me to picture a more complex understanding of the relocation situation than the one presented for example in the media I had previously found. I tried to discuss and interact both with the people who came to work in Kivalina, and with local leaders or villagers. I also went to Kotzebue to discuss with regional authorities (Park Service, NANA Regional Corporation, Northwest Arctic Borough). My observations in the village were combined with: archival and library research in Fairbanks (UAF Rasmuson library, Alaska & Polar Collections), Anchorage (University of Alaska Anchorage library), Kotzebue (NANA Museum of the Arctic library), and Kivalina (Kivalina City and IRA administration building); numerous non-recorded or informal discussions (DeWalt, DeWalt 2011:137-156) with consultants, villagers, local leaders, regional authorities, state and federal employee, or teachers; a dozen formal semi-directive interviews with village local leaders and with state representatives in Kivalina, Kotzebue and Anchorage; one public community meeting audio recording obtained from a journalist; a review of the existing literature about the Iñupiaq culture and the Northwest Arctic region as well as the relocation issues in Alaska; multiple web research on state and federal official websites, blogs, and media websites related to relocation and climate change. I continued to communicate with some Kivalina residents as well as institutional personnel through emails and Facebook. A council member has read my work and has commented it. At the end, I can say that my first encounter with the relocation topic in Northern Alaska was through consulting media documentation.

³ Community is an emic term widely used by Kivalina residents, state representatives, and even scholars to designate a village and the people who live in it. I will only use it to designate the village’s population as a whole, especially when talking about public meetings. I am conscious that this notion is problematic and does not render the diversity of people, opinions, and interests that exist in a social group of individuals.

2. The Media, a Doorway to Ethnography

It all started with a newspaper article. On a morning of spring 2008, I was drinking coffee and reading an international newspaper at the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland. A story about an Arctic Alaskan village grabbed my attention. The journalist was reporting about the latest events in this small village. In the reporter's words, "the Alaska Native coastal village of Kivalina, which is being forced to relocate because of flooding caused by the changing Arctic climate, filed a suit in federal court here arguing that five oil companies, 14 electric utilities and the country's largest coal company were responsible for the village's woes" (Barringer, 2008:3). The industrial activities of these companies are thought to be a cause of contemporary climate and environmental changes in the Arctic. At that time, I was looking for a subject for my master's thesis. In fact, without knowing it, I had already started my fieldwork. I realized it much later that taking into account the media coverage of the "climate change lawsuit" and the environmental issues in Kivalina had been the first part of the research process.

During the winter of 2008-2009, I was in California visiting a friend who is active in environmental protection. This was about the time for me to elaborate the subject of my thesis. At that time, the political environmental discussions about opening the Arctic for further drilling reported by the main American media made me feel that oil and gas development could be an attractive subject of study for several reasons. First, it would allow me to use the methodological tools of the anthropology of development (e.g. Olivier de Sardan 2005) that I learned at the Anthropology Institute in Neuchâtel⁴. Second, Iñupiat populations of Northern Alaska live close to their natural environment, while benefitting financially from projects linked to the oil and mining industry development. This situation often generates social and political debates that can be of great interest for social anthropology. I had planned to do research on consequences the development of oil and gas industry have on the perception of the environment for local Iñupiat, especially the ones that had to relocate their village for industrial purposes such as Nuiqsut on the North Slope⁵. The northern regions of Alaska have been going through drastic political and economic changes during the last decades. Studying these

⁴ Dr. Marion Fresia, Assistant Professor at the Anthropology Institute in Neuchâtel and my co-advisor for my master thesis, is teaching anthropology of development following the influences of the Euro-African Association for the Anthropology of Social Change and Development, and the Wageningen School.

⁵The North Slope Borough is the northern neighbor of the Northwest Arctic Borough to which Kivalina belongs both politically and economically.

contextual social and cultural changes from a village or local perspective could therefore be useful in understanding local perceptions of environmental changes.

To consolidate this idea and project, I flew to Fairbanks in Alaska. Recalling that the first person of contact is often the one that shapes the way one encounters the field, I realize my first contacts were made through the University of Alaska Fairbanks⁶. It is there that I shaped my research project, with the help and advice from several actors working in the academic context of Alaska. That is where the name of Kivalina came onto the scene again. One researcher and professor I consulted was Dr. Claire Alix, an archeologist at UAF and specialist in drift-wood. She had done fieldwork in the Alaska Arctic regions. We talked about access to fieldwork and about the numerous government agencies and research programs that work and exist on the North Slope. She explained me the North Slope Borough was crowded with researchers, state and federal agency workers, and reporters. As a consequence, the people who live there are becoming reluctant to see new scientists and students coming to do research in the region. I will discuss this issue in chapter 3, as I had to confront a similar situation in Kivalina.

Alix's main advice was to choose a smaller village, where fieldwork would have fewer political implications, especially as the master academic project leaves limited time. She mentioned Wainwright, a village located southwest of Barrow. She also mentioned Kivalina. I remembered my early encounter with this village name and became quickly convinced that following her advice would be a fruitful move. From there on, even though it meant giving up a study on oil and gas development consequences, I would try to go to Kivalina. I took out my newspaper article about Kivalina and started to search for some preliminary information. Dozens of newspaper article, blogs, websites, Youtube videos, documentaries, official documentation or reports, and even music were accessible through web research⁷. What became clear was that the need for relocation was presented in the media and in official reports as a direct result of climate change, but how can we define climate change after all?

⁶ Before leaving Switzerland, the head of the Anthropology Institute in Neuchâtel, Dr. Christian Ghasarian, had given me the address of Dr. Patrick Plattet, at that time a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Now an Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology at UAF, Patrick also became the "American" supervisor for my project.

⁷ I spent the month of January 2009 at UAF learning about Alaska history and researching in the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library Archives, especially the very rich Alaska & Polar Regions Collection. It was a stimulating period that allowed me to familiarize myself with the American academic context and the American Arctic research environment.

3. Defining Climate Change

Many recent publications assess climate change as a reality for the world in general, and for the Arctic in particular (e.g. IPCC 2007; ACIA 2005; Emanuel 2007; Dimento & Doughman 2007). The idea of climate change⁸ has now its room in the concerns of scientist and numerous indigenous or aboriginal societies in the Arctic such as Iñupiat in Alaska and Inuit in Canada. Whether it is perceived as a positive or negative situation, man-made or not, climate and environmental changes are taking place in the American Arctic. Furthermore, Arctic societies need particular attention, as they are some of the populations experiencing these changes firsthand. This rhetoric is widely used by the media. There is also solid scientific backing that attests to the environmental changes already happening in the Arctic, as well as those that are to come. The scientific consensus on Arctic climate change is supported by numerous local testimonies, hearings, and assessments made by local observers who are experiencing the transformations of their environment (IOCC 2010; IISD 2000; Government of Nunavut 2005; Indigenous Global Summit on Climate Change 2009).

The science behind Arctic climate change is complex. Climatic, ecological, and human induced factors are bound together as the most recent report from the panel of international experts on climate change has demonstrated (IPCC 2007). For our purpose, one example will suffice to give a basic idea of how the Arctic and the human groups who call it home are directly impacted by the global climatic and environmental changes. Polar amplification (Emanuel 2007) can be one. First, as the earth's atmospheric temperature rises, the ice from the arctic glaciers and the polar caps are melting rapidly during the summer seasons. Second, the oceans have the capacity to absorb the heat produced by the sun. In the arctic region the heat is normally reflected by the ice and sent back into space. In other words, the ice acts as a reflector. Third, the more heat the Arctic gets, the more the ice will melt. The more the ice melts, the more the oceans warm, producing the melting of the ice. This vicious circle generates two sources of heat that melt the ice; the whole process is leading to a positive feedback loop (DiMento & Doughman 2007: 84; ACIA 2004). In addition, when the temperature of the air rises, so does that of the oceans and the seas. This might sound "exotic" for those

⁸ "Climate change" and "global warming" are frequently used in a similar way to describe contemporary environmental and weather transformations. In Kivalina, "global warming" was mostly used by residents. In this thesis, I will use "climate changes", as it enable to describes a global phenomenon, with societal and local consequences. The earth's temperature is raising in general (IPCC 2007), but it does not mean that each region of the globe see the same environmental consequences and local temperatures rise.

who love to take a northern swim. It is however, quite another story for marine life. The cool oceans are a much richer environment for plankton, fish, and sea mammals, while the warm waters are considered to be the deserts of the oceans (Lovelock 2006). Arctic waters are well known for their rich marine life, a fact that has enabled northern human societies to survive for a very long period of time. Consequently, if the water temperatures increase significantly, there will be direct impacts on the marine life, which constitute today a consistent part of the local mix-economies in the Arctic. If this simple explanation of polar amplification does not render the complexity of such a phenomena, it shows us that with higher temperatures, the melting of ice will increase in the future and will have consequences for the livelihood of Iñupiaq societies, especially for subsistence practices and travels (Nuttall, Crate 2010).

Climate change is first and foremost an ecological phenomenon that has direct and indirect concrete impacts on local Iñupiaq communities. Climate change is also an abstract idea with multiple meanings and possible interpretations, according to the context of its enunciation. Climate change for Kivalina residents does not have the same meaning, than for government workers, journalists or scientists who deal with relocation. In the case of relocation debates, I perceive climate change as local unparalleled ecological phenomenon. I see it also as an idea used to grasp the attention of governments, the media, and the general public on local issues. For instance, the contemporary need for relocation in Kivalina is considered to be provoked or worsened by the changing environment and the rising temperatures. For that reason, climate change can also be considered as a political discourse. Following this reasoning, I understand climate change as an idea, a notion that has been imported from the international society, international organizations such as the United Nations, and the science experts' panels to a local scale. Milton Kay would add, "the discourse of climate change, with its scientific, economic, political and moral dimensions, is a relatively recent arrival in the global arena, and it is changing the way local events are framed and understood" (2008:52-53). In that way, the notion of "climate change" is now used by leaders and individuals from communities to address and name the changes that are happening in their environment. The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) has widely contributed to the diffusion of the idea of climate change. This institutional actor did so by lobbying, for example, the Canadian and U.S. governments to take action on the environmental issues that the Arctic is now facing (e.g. Watt-Cloutier 2004).

4. From Ethical Matters to Fieldwork: Negotiating a Path

With the political dimension of climate change in mind, I went back to Switzerland at the beginning of spring 2009 to finish my graduate studies and prepare my next stay in Alaska. As a Swiss student I had different ways to enter the United States territory. A Swiss tourist is allowed to stay three months in the US, but that would have been too short for a first experience with fieldwork in the Arctic. I decided to use the academic way to get a student visa. Therefore, with the help of the UAF and UNINE international offices, Assistant Professor Patrick Plattet (UAF) and I initiated an official exchange program between the two universities. I was the first student to benefit from this program. Mentioning it is important because, studying in an American university means following its ethical requirements. At UAF, these requirements are established by an Institutional Review Board.

This institution ensures that ethical principles for research are taken seriously by students and researchers who intend to work with “human subjects” in Alaska⁹. In the case of Kivalina, before I could travel to this village and start my work, my research proposal had to be approved by the IRB. It consisted of filing administrative paperwork, following an online training program, preparing a “Statement of Informed Consent” (see appendix c, document 2), and meeting with representatives of the IRB office. I had to prove that I would be no harm to the “human subjects” of the research I was about to undertake, following the *Belmont report* (OHRP 1979) guidelines. To do so, I had to demonstrate that my work would follow the three main principles of “human subject” protections: a) respect the persons and their autonomy to collaborate or not to the research; b) do not harm and maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms; c) follow the principle of justice in determining who would receive the benefits of research and bear its burdens (OHRP 1979, IRB 2010). If I could have left for Kivalina without considering the IRB procedures, the members of the UAF department of anthropology I consulted advised me to go through these procedures, in order to “cover my back”.

The situation was in some ways awkward. I was about to do fieldwork for a social science project and the IRB forms were clearly made by and for natural and medical

⁹ For more information on the Institutional Review Board and its mission, see <http://www.uaf.edu/irb>.

sciences projects, although this is not to say they were entirely irrelevant¹⁰. It is more that social anthropology teaches us to read between the lines and the prevalence of Arctic research “institutional mechanisms for evaluation, normalization and control, authorization and interdiction” (Cefaï 2009:4) based on natural sciences were getting clearer. I have to mention here that if the IRB’s websites recommends the American Anthropological Association’s *Statements of ethics* (1971; 1998), these seem not to influence directly the IRB at University of Alaska Fairbanks when it comes to ethnographic research. For social research, there are several written web resources (e.g. Crowell 2000; ANKN 2000, 2006) that researchers can use. However, The IRB forms are clearly influenced by natural and medical sciences research practices. Nevertheless, there is in the American Arctic, to my knowledge, no state or federal official permits administrative procedures for ethnography. In some villages which have a history of collaboration with researchers like Barrow on the North Slope, local authorities require that scientists obtain their approval before starting any research. This is mostly the case for natural and medical science research project. In the Canadian Arctic regions, permits restricting the access of rural communities to researchers have existed for many years. Regional and local authorities can therefore make a choice. These procedures push towards a greater collaboration between local inhabitants and researchers or scientists. To orient these procedures in Arctic research, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the National Inuit Organization in Canada, with the Nunavut Research Institute and the University of Toronto have issued documentation (ITK, NRI 2007) to orient researchers in their relationship with indigenous research partners. In Europe, and especially in the French speaking countries like France or Switzerland, the tendency is also for sociological and anthropological professional associations to issue ethics guidelines. The critics are, however, strong and many scholars question the relevancy of medical and natural sciences inspired fieldwork guidelines applied to ethnography (e.g. for France: Bosa 2008; Cefaï 2009. For Switzerland: Berthod, Forney, Kradolfer, Neuhaus, Ossipow Wuest, Papadaniel, Perrin 2010). Nonetheless, clearance procedures at UAF that were characteristic of natural and medical science research influenced my entry into specific social networks in Kivalina. For instance, it was not possible simply to go to the village and start my work, dealing with the question of access to fieldwork on arrival as many ethnographers do. I had to obtain permission to start fieldwork, an authorization I would

¹⁰ One can read for example on the IRB website that “working with indigenous populations or disadvantaged groups requires additional care and preparation to ensure that activities are conducted in a culturally appropriate manner” (<http://www.uaf.edu/irb/professional-standards>, accessed 10/08/2010).

have to provide to the UAF's ethic committee. As a consequence, I needed authorization from local authorities, whether it would be the "Kivalina City Council" or the "Kivalina Tribal/IRA¹¹ Council" (see letter in appendix c, document 2).

Consequently, members of the local councils and administrations are the people with whom I spent most of my fieldwork time. My first person of contact was the City administrator. She was the first to welcome me, provide a place to live, and food, some of it local¹². During the first days I slept in the city office, giving me a first opportunity to observe how official meetings and administrative work on relocation was done. I then moved for a month to the McQueen School where I associated with teachers as well as federal and state representatives. The school is the place where they sleep during their stays in Kivalina. I had access to the school library which contains monographs about the region and Iñupiaq culture. It is also at the school that I learned to know some of the people who have a fix job in the village, a privileged position in terms of incomes. If some of them are members of the local governing bodies, it was also an opportunity to talk with other Kivalina residents, the school being a place where people gather daily.

I spent the two next stay, one week during fall 2009 and three months during winter 2009-2010 in the old village jail house which became my home. Living alone in the house gave me the opportunity to meet all kind of people. I learned to know mainly members from two of the main extended families in the village. These members do not necessarily have similar opinions and expectations on the relocation of their village. I was accepted in and taken care of by one family, but I could also visit and associate with members of other ones. Therefore my discussions with local residents about relocation happened mainly within the context of political and religious leading families, but were not limited only to one group of individuals. It is clear that my ethnographic material is influenced by this social context but is not limited to it. Discussions with plain people and other village residents also showed me some political and social issues associated to relocation, namely divergent forms of trust in the local governments' actions.

¹¹ Both terms are used by regional, state and federal officials, as well as local inhabitants. I heard the word "tribal" more often pronounced by people who do not live in Kivalina. IRA refers to the *Indian Reorganization Act* of 1934 that created local political powers for native communities. The IRA council has a government to government relationship with the federal government of the United-States.

¹² Local food is subsistence food. This type of food such as the caribou and beluga soup, whale meat and skin, or seal oil has often been misjudged and looked down on by "whites" or "outsiders". Sharing plates was a nice way to build mutual trust and respect.

To summarize, the ethic procedures influenced my insertion in specific social networks. It has also influenced the way I wrote this thesis. Before I left Kivalina, I told the IRA administrator and member of the City Council, that I would ask her to read the thesis before sending the final version to my advisors. The idea was that I felt the need to make sure my work would do no harm to the people who welcomed me. The IRB procedures had clearly influenced my approach. This seemed relevant as this master thesis focuses on climate change and relocation, two main themes of the lawsuit Kivalina leaders have filed. Consequently, collaboration and the need to do no harm are two reasons for asking a council member to read my work as well as for integrating a section I wrote with another Kivalina residents (see chapter 3, section 3). As I was in Kivalina, I also shared as much as possible the documentation, pictures, video recordings, and archives material I could gather. These forms of collaboration would not have been possible, without the local leaders changing their perspective on research undertaken in their village.

During my two semesters at the UAF, several researchers told me that working in Arctic villages is not an easy task. These comments might have hidden a will to restrict the access of what some anthropologists consider “their” field, the American Arctic regions being areas that have been thoroughly researched. It can also suggest another reality. Most of the time, local residents and especially local authorities and councils do not see the coming of strangers in their village as desirable. The colonial past of Alaska is still very present in the minds of many “rural” Alaskans and the painful memories that some start to express within the privacy of homes explains partially why there is a will to restrict research.

I followed Cook and Crang’s suggestion to “try email-shots in the place you intend to study, email individuals and groups identified through targeted web surfing, blog reading and/or through taking part in internet chat rooms discussion” (2007:18). I contacted the Kivalina City Council through its administrator and she suggested I should send my request by email. I sent a letter presenting my project (see appendix d). Rapidly I received a surprisingly welcoming answer, in which the administrator explained that I could “of course” come and work in the village. I had found the address on a website dedicated to the village activities¹³ and everything was contradicting the comments about difficulty of access for researchers in Alaska I had heard at UAF. It was not until

¹³ www.kivalinacity.com, accessed July 2009.

much later, during my third trip to Kivalina, that I understood some of the reasons why I received a positive answer.

Before 2004-2005, the local authorities were much stricter about newcomers. Many studies had been undertaken within the context of relocation. Some critiques I often heard from the councils' members were accusing researchers and contractors of neglecting local concerns, comments, or knowledge. However, things changed following a fall storm that hit the village of Kivalina in October 2004, severely eroding the coast and flooding parts of the village. This storm followed several other ones in the past decades, and preceded an evacuation of the entire village in 2007. As the IRA Council vice-president with whom I spent a lot of time, explains in one of the documentaries that were shot in Kivalina, "the storm was an eye opener" (Kivalina 2010). As the erosion and relocation situation was not improving at all, a few local leaders decided that external attention was needed. They felt the media and other social actors could relay their concerns towards a wider audience, and should therefore be welcomed in Kivalina. The climate change lawsuit was part of this reasoning. From that point on, a flow of "outsiders"¹⁴ started to fly into the village every summer to work, document, and analyze the situation of Kivalina. It is in this local, social, and political context that I undertook ethnographic work in Kivalina. What consequences this specific environment had on the research subject elaboration is the subject of the next section.

5. A Motionless Relocation: Framing a Research Subject

The first step of my research process was to analyze the media material I already had. I focused on the facts and the discourse that websites, newspaper article, and blogs were presenting. They were announcing an imminent move of the village: "An Alaskan Island Finds Itself Losing Ground" (Zarembo 2007); "Kivalina: a Washing Away History" (Aleister 2008); "Kivalina, Alaska: A Melting Village" (Darlington 2008). The situation was clearly getting worse and the "melting village" would have to be rebuilt. These statements influenced the initial framing of my anthropological object, as "mass media, whether it is regional press or large international media companies, determine the perception and interpretation of events and facts within the public space" (Boller & Biher 2010:12). Consequently, I oriented my interests towards the procedures of

¹⁴ The emic meaning of "outsiders" refers to people who do not live in Kivalina. It has sometimes a negative meaning, when describing people who do not have respect for the local customs and practices. It can also refer to the distinction between the "inside" and the "outside" of the village.

relocation and developed the idea of researching the process and its planning. I wanted to understand what social and cultural consequences the relocation of a whole village would have on its population. On a cultural level, how would the inhabitants recreate small neighborhoods? Would kinship and family alliances play a role in the rebuilding of new households? And on a social or institutional level, what were the administrative procedures used by the authorities of Kivalina? What was the nature of the relations Kivalina leaders had with the several institutional representatives who were involved in the relocation process? How did the villagers who are not directly involved in the planning perceive the social changes resulting from this relocation process? And finally, how was the relocation process influencing their daily lives? These were the kind of questions I had in mind when I wrote my initial project proposal for UNINE and UAF. When I first arrived in Kivalina in the summer of 2009, I was surprised however to see workers renovating houses, building a new water facility in the middle of the village, completing the construction of a rock revetment – named “seawall” in the village – on the ocean side of the island. There was no indication whatsoever of an imminent move or relocation of the village. On the contrary, these construction sites were showing one thing; this village was not “melting” and would not move soon. The first elements of a *motionless relocation* were standing right in front of my eyes.

The difference between the media discourse relaying local concerns and the social and political situation I encountered in Kivalina made me question the validity of my initial approach, the study of the displacement itself. An ethnographical description of the village’s move was not feasible anymore for several reasons. First, it had been decades since this project was first discussed amongst the village leaders and the village is still on its original settlement. Second, the administrative process is particularly complex and would require much more time to analyze the entire relocation process. Third, when I first talked about relocation in the village, people seemed bored, embarrassed, or bothered by the subject. A villager even explained me that he tried to “stay out of these things.” Another one also explained me: “people don’t go anymore [to public community meetings] because they are tired of arguing. If they care about their kids, they should work together. If they want to relocate us, they have to work together” (Kivalina 2009). There was clearly an issue which sense had not been discussed in official reports and media documentation. Villagers were expressing frustration and lack of interest for the relocation process.



Figure 3: The construction of the new health clinic in Kivalina 2009.

As the weeks passed since my arrival in Kivalina during the summer of 2009, questions were starting to grow in my mind. Why were new buildings being built when the village was supposed to be displaced in a near future? What could explain this lack of interest on the villagers' side about an issue that directly involved them? How could the international media exposure of this village be explained? Who was leading this project and who had the responsibility of making choices for the future of this village? Newtok, a village in Southwest Alaska whose leaders are also dealing with erosion and relocation, was being relocated by the United States Army. Therefore, I was wondering why Kivalina was not being relocated. In other words, who had the political influence to push for or block the move of the village? From the project of describing a displacement, the interpretation of a blockage was becoming the research's main topic.

For Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "describing and interpreting the world constitute a same and single process (often named comprehension in a tradition that goes from Wilhelm Dilthey to Max Weber), and any descriptive posture is also and consequently an interpretative posture" (2003:5). Furthermore, what ethnography can provide is an interpretation of social actors' interpretations (Emerson 1981; Dan Sperber 1987 quoted in Olivier de Sardan 2003:17; Clifford, Marcus 1986). In addition, I believe in multiple and partial truths (Clifford 1986:1-26). Thus, I consider that the role of social and cultural anthropology is to reveal and illuminate these multiple layers of reality. They

constitute the social interactions and phenomenon an ethnographer observes. Consequently, the interpretation of the blockage's causes, based on my ethnographic material, would generate a detailed understanding of the current relocation process.

As a result, I formulated the following main working hypotheses:

I suggest that the whole contemporary relocation project of Kivalina, more than an isolated event in the history of the village, can be seen as a long term *chain of events* that stretches over the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, this project takes its roots in the history of colonization of the Northwest Arctic region of Alaska. This process has been marked by periods of advances and other ones of blockages.

Each *generation of leaders and relocation activists* (Marino 2009), for the last fifty years, had to deal with these issues of erosion and did it with its own means. The current generation of leaders and activists uses its own resources to address the problem of relocation.

The contemporary situation of the process can be characterized as a *blockage*, underlining the paradoxical situation observed during fieldwork. On a level of discourses, Kivalina is in the process of being relocated, while practices' analysis shows that the village will remain on at its actual location for an unknown period of time. This difference between discourses and practices can be described as a situation of *motionless relocation* crystalizing divergent representations of how the relocation should be undertaken.

The planning and the realization of a relocation project designed to improve living standards of Kivalina inhabitants have led to *side effects* (Olivier de Sardan 2005) such as frustration, lack of hope, and immobility. Some residents have described this situation as a "battle fatigue".

From the discussions described in this introduction and the above working hypotheses, the following question progressively emerged as particularly relevant and central to my research project: *What can explain the blockage of the relocation process in Kivalina?* This question can be divided in several sub-questions: why is relocation needed? What are the tools and resources the Kivalina authorities can use to address relocation? Which actors of the relocation process hold political power that they can use? And what is the

nature of the relation between institutional and individual actors of the relocation? The main objective of the next chapters is to address these questions and develop a social and cultural anthropological analysis of a motionless relocation. This analysis must not be frozen in time. Only by doing so is it possible to leave room for analytical improvements or new ideas that could benefit the process and the people who work for it. Furthermore, an actor oriented (Long 2001) ethnographic interpretation of the relocation blockage underlines the need of contextualizing the relocation as a process, within a broader historical and institutional framework.

I chose a case study to discuss my main research question. The Consensus Building Project analyzed in chapter 2 was designed by a consultant working for the State of Alaska and the City of Kivalina. The goals of the project were to overcome the process' blockage and determine which direction the Kivalina residents want to give to the relocation planning process. The analysis of this project reveals a period of transition from a blockage to an advance of the relocation process, while underlining socio-political tensions and divergent interests the relocation planning has generated. In other words, interactions between institutional representatives and the villagers of Kivalina have led to the political and institutional situation of the blockage. Acknowledging the need for historical context, chapter 1 examines the historical role of colonization and the ways in which the colonial context generated a long lasting "need" for relocation in Kivalina.

CHAPTER 1

The Legacy of Relocation

1. A Late Colonization

Like other Arctic human societies, the Iñupiat have always known social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental changes. The development of colonization has however caused some unprecedented transformations in the livelihood of the Iñupiat. The colonization of the American North lasted from the mid-19th century to the late 1950s, a period fairly recent when compared to other regions of the globe. In Northwest Alaska, the history of colonization was principally marked by western whaling and missionaries' activities, as well as by the fur trade and reindeer herding. As Schweitzer and Lee explain, the first period of this colonization process had heavy consequences on local Iñupiaq groups:

“By 1848, New England-based vessels in search for bowhead whales had reached Bering Strait (Bockstoece 1986). For the next 60 years a multitude of annual voyages was to severely affect Eskimo economies and societies in Alaska, Russia, and northwestern Canada. Besides the dramatic over-harvesting of whales and, to a lesser degree, walrus – major food items for many communities in the area – social disruption resulted from exploitative trade, the emergence of economic stratification, and the spread of diseases” (1997:38)

When one compares human groups and geographical regions, the question is not to understand whether changes occur or not, because social (Olivier de Sardan 2005) and climate changes are characteristics of every society. What is important to underline is at what pace these changes happen. In the Northwest American Arctic, social and economic changes became intense and rapid during the second part of the century: the creation of the Alaskan state in 1959, the discovery of tremendous quantity of oil in Prudhoe Bay during the late 1960s with the environmental and land claims controversies (Naske & Slotnick 1987; Coates 1993), and in the case of Kivalina the mining industry¹⁵, all contributed to transform life of Iñupiat in the Northwest. In other words, in less than half a century Iñupiaq societies have changed from migratory to (semi-) sedentary, from a subsistence economy to a mix of cash and subsistence economy, from a locally managed political power to political decisions inserted in a globalized and transnational world. Kivalina is one out of several coastal and inland Iñupiaq villages where these historical realities have led to the contemporary situation in which relocation is a central issue for residents.

¹⁵ The Red Dog Mine, the largest zinc mine in the world operates in the Delong Mountains in the traditional subsistence area of Kivalina and Noatak inhabitants. Red Dog Mine's port is located less than 20 miles south of Kivalina.

Describing this particular historical context, it is crucial to understand the relocation planning as a process which stretches over almost the entire 20th century. The following sections provide this historical perspective. The first one gives a brief overview of the pre-colonial period, in other words, before the missionaries and whalers settled. The second one focuses on the period of time which runs from the creation of a school on the Kivalina Island in the early 19th century to the creation of the Alaskan State. The third one concerns the interval between the creation of the state and the oil discovery.

2. The Kivalliñigmiut during the Pre-Colonial Period

There are actually few documents or oral testimonies left that enable us to understand life in the Northwest before the first whalers came to this part of the Bering Strait area. In the Alaskan academic world, oral history is a valued approach to recover some of the early lifestyles, practices, and beliefs of the Northwest populations (Schneider 2002, 2008). It was used by Burch to realize his leading ethno-historical research about Iñupiaq populations of Northwest Alaska (e.g. Burch 1966, 1998, 2005, and 2006). Burch was an anthropologist and lived in Kivalina for many years.

In view of Kivalina's relocation, the most significant historical information is the following: first, the early Kivalliñigmiut Nation (Burch 1998), the ancestors of the contemporary Kivalina residents, were seasonal nomads. During spring and the June seal hunt, the beginning of the traditional Iñupiaq yearly cycle, the Kivalliñigmiut settlements were spread along the coast, on each side of the current Kivalina Island¹⁶ (see appendix a). It seems that most of the camps were located on grounds with access to the mainland (Burch 1998:32-33). The winter period was spent inland, along rivers where access to fish and water sources was possible. Therefore, it is clear that Kivalina Island, where the actual village stands, was only used as a seasonal settlement during the spring and summer seasons. Recently, during my stay in Kivalina, archeological remains were found during the construction of a new water plant (Barber 2009; Mitchell 2010). These remains are thought to be of Ipiuttag origin, a population that occupied the area before the Kivalliñigmiut. Some villagers remembered old stories about the Ipiuttag, such as the following one:

¹⁶ About the name of the island, Mitchell suggests that “there was confusion about the first name of the area. The original place where the people lived was located on the mainland north from the island across the *Kivalliik* Channel. When the people were forced to move to the island, they took the name *Kivalinagmiut* with them. The island was called *Sinigaqmiut*, the channel place. That name is not used but is remembered as the original name of the island” (2010a).

“The stories of the Ipiuttag have been passed on from generation to generation but this short story is all I know of the tribe. They are very short, stocky and full of incredible strength. They mind their own business and live a very elusive life, devoid of contact with any other people...unless they choose to show themselves. They are compassionate because on occasion, they have assisted the Inupiaq on a rare occasion when the Inupiaq have shown themselves to be in a helpless situation while out in the tundra gathering food.

Years and years ago, the Ipiuttag Tribe lived in close proximity with the Inupiaq people, often times in the same community. Like all nomadic people, they would stop at a village while passing through to enjoy the company, food and comfort of a heated home while traveling. One day, a family of the Ipiuttag tribe was passing through a village when a disturbing event occurred. It had been a lean year and there was hunger in the village. The couple had a very young son. He was walking past the dogs with his mother when one of the dogs lunged and devoured the little boy in one quick swoop. The mother yelled for her husband, who wasn't far away. He lunged at the dog, flipped it on its back and cut open it's stomach with one long sweep of a knife. He dug out his son but the little body was already lifeless. He was very much angered by the incident and demanded that all dogs be destroyed before another incident like that happened again to his people. The leader and members of the Inupiaq community met and came to the conclusion that they needed the dogs to hunt and survive so refused to destroy all dogs in the town. The angered member of the Ipiuttag tribe packed all his belongings, told his people they were never coming back to another Inupiaq village. The dogs were too dangerous for their people. They were never seen again.

These people didn't die off; they just chose not to be seen again. On a rare occasion, various members of some villages report catching a glimpse of these people. On a few occasions in Kivalina, two hunters on separate occasions have actually been helped by a small man dressed in Native clothing. Both had been in a situation where they were helpless to get out of by themselves” (Mitchell 2010).

I heard this story in Kivalina told by several villagers. It echoes stories of the small people that can be heard throughout the Arctic in the Thule migration areas (Alaska, Canada, and Greenland). Burch's work, the remains found in Kivalina, and the story above all show the location has been used for a very long period as a stopping place, for travelers between the North Slope and the Kotzebue Sound area.

For more details about the Kivalliñigmiut period, Burch's work remains the reference (see for example Burch 1998:22-57). In the case of Kivalina, his research sustains the view that a seasonal subsistence camp was eventually transformed into a permanent settlement. What factors have paved the way for sedentarisation, a cause explaining the need for relocation?

3. Paving the Way to Relocation: Building Churches and Schools

In the Alaskan history of colonization, a distinctive aspect is the rapid Christianization of the Arctic regions (Burch 1994). Christian missionaries spread the gospel among Iñupiaq groups, settlements, and villages in the Northwest and in the North of Alaska

within a few decades. Burch even wrote that “in 1890 there probably was not a single Christian Inupiaq (sing.) Eskimo. Twenty years later, there was scarcely an Inupiaq who was not a Christian” (1994:81). In Kivalina, the Christian religion has quickly left its mark. Namely, the first Native Alaskan priest from the Episcopal Church was from Kivalina. Missionaries arrived in Kivalina from Kotzebue and Point Hope at the end of the 19th and early 20th century¹⁷. As Fejes explains it about her stay in Point Hope, the next village north of Kivalina during the early 1950s:

“The Episcopal church was established at Point Hope in 1890. Since it was a remote village of only about three hundred and fifty souls, one church had more than sufficed. In the early days the church had also supplied the first schooling for the children in addition to religious instruction and had built missions in Kivalina and Point Lay. The Friends church established at Kotzebue in 1898 branched out into the Kobuk area and Noatak, [and later on into Kivalina]” (Fejes 1994 (1966):104)

Missionaries at that time had a dual role. They were seeking conversion and also followed the U.S. Bureau of Education (BOE) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) representatives’ policies (Haycox 2002:185). Under the supervision of Sheldon Jackson, a reformed churchman, these were geared towards “educating” or “civilizing” the native populations by using acculturation methods. In other words, “what the missionaries and the Bureau of Indian Affairs meant by “civilizing the Indian [as well as Eskimo and Aleuts]” was acculturation, the supplanting of Native culture with mainstream, white, Protestant, American culture” (Haycox 2002:185). The acculturation and “education” practices previously used in the American West and Plains became a model for Sheldon Jackson who by then had become the general agent for the BOE in Alaska. Indigenous people were forbidden to speak their native tongue; in Kivalina, it was Iñupiaq. There was “one difference from the Bureau of Indian Affairs program in the American West, however: in Alaska the BOE would not construct boarding schools but would rely on day schools in every village possible” (Haycox 2002:193). Kivalina was one of them. A consequence of this approach was the creation in Kivalina of a U.S Indian School (see figure 4) through the establishment of missionary infrastructures. Missionaries were

¹⁷ According to local residents, the Episcopal Church was settled after the Friends church. The Episcopalians came from the North, more specifically from Point Hope, and Friends arrived from Kotzebue. The Episcopal Church was converting Iñupiaq less restrictively than the Friends church did. For example Iñupiaq dancing and singing was forbidden by the Friends, not by the Episcopalian. It is even said that the Episcopalian minister from Point Hope used to dance himself (Fejes 1994). These interdictions were also happening in Kivalina. It is only since 2008 that young people have been allowed to dance qinugan again. There is now a tendency of the Friends Native priest to consider traditions like singing, as a powerful tool for an Iñupiaq identity revival movement through the Bible.

given the role and power by the federal government to teach the local children English and the white, protestant American ways of life. To summarize, “the missionaries and the Bureau of Education teachers worked as a single establishment in Alaska, and many missionaries became government teachers” (Haycox 2002:238). These teachers had to report to their home institution every year about the advance of their work. School reports and correspondence written by Kivalina teachers to the Bureau of Education Alaska division in Nome (Bureau of Indian Affairs 1908-1915) clearly show the attempt to radically transform the lives of local Iñupiaq residents.

This period saw creation of a permanent settlement and the transformation of the Kivalliñigmiut nomadic life to a sedentary life, such as contemporary Kivalina residents know it today. The then-acting city administrator gave a brief explanation on her website¹⁸:

“In 1904-1905, according to the elders, The Bureau of Indian Affairs decided that all children should attend school. [...] When the BIA came to the area to build a school, the inhabitants were told that if they don’t send their children to school, they would be jailed. That led the people who were living inland and down the coasts to migrate to the island so their children can attend school. That is why the people now live on the island of Kivalina” (Mitchell 2010).

Today, this explanation is well known among the local elite families. It was shared with me several times and raises a question: was this forced sedentarisation the fruit of solely a political will or the result of daily interactions? Understanding how the everyday relationships, dialogue, and interactions between the missionaries and teachers would be necessary to deepen our understanding of this early period. The indigenous inhabitants of the Kivalina region were not passive recipients of change. For Pels, to understand local social changes during the colonial period, we need to avoid studying colonialism solely as a global strategy (1997). We should rather examine the interactions between settlers and local residents. Mikow quoting Turton (2006) and Long (2001) suggests that Iñupiaq individuals were purposeful actors, using individual and group strategy to deal with changes imposed upon them (2010:29). To analyze these daily interactions, the school reports and correspondences (Bureau of Indian Affairs 1908-1915) are

¹⁸ I use quotations from this website as written opinions and testimonies about the relocation issue. The person who created this website is one of the individuals who contributed most notably to my fieldwork. She explained to me that she created this website for the “outsiders” who come to work in Kivalina, as well as for journalist and reporters. This website also became a way for her to share her opinion about the situation she lives in and to try to give a local point of view about issues that have been largely documented in the media. I discuss this aspect of the Kivalina relocation in chapter 3.

appropriate documents to understand how the acculturation was deliberately planned, but also built through everyday interactions. Explaining how the missionaries and school teachers overtook a predominant role in the life of the local Iñupiat is crucial. These missionaries were creating the first elements explaining the contemporary need for relocation in Kivalina.



Figure 4: Kivalina *U.S. Indian School*, 1939. Source: www.alaskool.org.

Building a school on Kivalina Island, followed by the construction of a church, were the first steps towards the creation of a permanent settlement on a location that was not used as such by local inhabitants. In that sense, the creation of a village or settlement on a seasonal migration stopping point which was not used during winter time because of harsh environmental and climatic conditions can be considered as the first cause of the contemporary relocation issue. Nowadays, strong winds and blizzard create snow accumulation near the houses and infrastructures, with the risks of buried houses with no air circulation. The place can also become extremely cold, compared to other locations in the area.

To sustain this understanding of the earliest causes contributing to the present context of relocation, one particular school report stands out. Written by a teacher who was at the time a federal employee, the *1911 Kivalina Annual Report*¹⁹ provides a distinctive

¹⁹ The existence of this document was mentioned to me by a member of the present-day City council and former principal of the McQueen School in Kivalina, a resident of Kivalina for nearly thirty years. He

element to the understanding of the relocation process, adding almost 50 years to the debate. Most existing documents about relocation – including testimonies given by members of local authorities for the Federal and Alaska state agencies, federal and state reports, scholars’ monographs, or the Kivalina city website – present the relocation as a process dating back to the 1950s. However, a few years after the construction of the mission and the school, discussions about relocation had already started among Kivalina residents:

“Kivalina is situated on an island in front of Corwin Lagoon, and is very beautifully situated when the weather is nice and calm, but when the wind blows from the south it raises the water in the ocean, until it sometimes almost comes over the banks, it washed away a part of the South East end of the Island last summer. Every summer more of it goes and the natives are beginning to talk of moving. We believe that to move would be the wiser if not the safer plan. We experienced some uneasiness last fall, as the beach is only about one hundred feet from the school house and comes closer every year. The water was splashing up over the bank in places for we had heavy south wind and it lasted for three or four days, causing the rise. We believe that if it could be satisfactorily arranged, to consolidate Kivalina and the Noatak villages somewhere on the Noatak River, would be a good plan. Some of the people of our village have already spoken to some of the Noatak people and there seem to be a general feeling that this could be done, and we believe it would be a wise move” (Replogle 1911:13-14)

This document, like any other from that period, needs to be understood within its colonial context. It is an annual school report from teacher to the head of his division, the Bureau of Education in Nome, Alaska. This document shows that after a few years of federal influence on the island, especially through the school, the inhabitants were already acknowledging problems of the actual location of the village, exposed to arctic storms and weather. To summarize, the building of Kivalina School marked the creation of the contemporary Kivalina village:

“The establishment of the reindeer herds, school, and mission marked the founding of the modern village of Kivalina” (Burch 1998:55-56)

“Kivalina was founded in 1905, when a school was built on an island opposite the mouth of the Wulik River. A settlement grew up around the school, and that settlement Developed into the modern village” (Burch 1985:2)

Another piece of documentation that convincingly corroborates Ernest S. Burch’s historical analysis about the foundation date of the school in Kivalina is a list of teachers who taught in Kivalina from 1905 to 1974 (see appendix c). The first names mentioned are Alfred and Priscilla Walton in 1905. This list is complete according to local residents

found the document on a teaching resource website (www.alaskool.org). I later found this document in the BIA archives at the UAF Archives in the Alaska & Polar Regions Collection

who worked for the school and who had parents or grandparents who remembered the early missionaries and teachers of Kivalina. During my stay in Kivalina, I also often heard the story about the creation of the school. It is said that when the boat with construction material approached from the south, men saw from it a camp on Kivalina Island. Kivalina City administrator explains about the early settlement:

“In the 1800's, Kivalina (Kivalinagmiut), which is an 8-mile barrier reef, was a stopping point for those traveling by land and sea. According to elder knowledge, Kivalina, which was originally located north of the island, became one of three villages that formed when some residents decided to leave the Tikigaq village [Point Hope] and make permanent residence in their respective choices on main lands. Because many of the original inhabitants lived inland, they made camp at the island to gather food. That could be the reason why the ship with the supplies to build a school unloaded on the island; they saw people who were probably camping on the island while gathering food and mistook it for the village” (Mitchell 2010).

The federal government representatives decided it should be a good place to settle and build the school. They did not know this place was only used as a camp, a temporary residence for people travelling between Point Hope and the Kotzebue area. They also did not know it was not necessarily an adequate location for the winter and Iñupiat were not accustomed to spending the winter on the island. This short story tells us that the place was being used only during certain periods of the year, due to environmental and weather conditions. Leaving the traditional knowledge debate for another paper (e.g. example Pottier, Bicker, Sillitoe 2003; Menzies 2003; Krech III 1999), it is important to mention here that when the BOE representatives arrived in Kivalina, they installed the settlement while lacking of information about the location and the area. This choice of settlement locations lies at the source of the contemporary relocation issue in coastal villages like Kivalina, or Shishmaref (Marino 2009). By creating a village on an island which was at that time already exposed to natural environmental hazards, the early settlers, missionaries, and federal schools and government representatives, along with some of the local Iñupiat, paved the way to the contemporary issues of relocation (Berardi 1999). This issue has affected several generations, while Kivalina's population grew overtime. As a result, the situation became more complex.

4. Kivalina Enters a New Era: Corporations and Landownerships

Again, only few written records provide an accurate account of life in Kivalina between the construction of the school and the 1950s. The first of the following excerpts is from Clarence L. Andrews who was teaching in Kivalina during the years 1922 and 1923,

according to the *Kivalina teachers list* (appendix c) and Burch (1998:24). He describes the village in a book about the Iñupiat reindeer herding period in the following passage:

“The island was five miles long, and a half mile wide at the farthest. The schoolhouse was a comfortable wooden structure with the teacherage at one end, as usual in that northern land. The other houses were Eskimo igloos, of driftwood, with sodded walls” (1939:17-18)

The next excerpt is taken from Fejes’ monograph *People of the Noatak* where she describes her stay in the village of Point Hope before the creation of the Alaska State in 1959. On her way to Point Hope, the plane made a stop in Kivalina:

“When we arrived at Kivalina, the villagers were out to meet the plane. One of the Eskimos wanted to know how many beluga they had killed at Sheshalik. “About eighty so far” I answered. The Kivalina had shot ten that morning. There was a large white schoolhouse but the rest were sod and small frame houses. The whole village seemed no larger than about six city blocks and faced the sea” (Fejes 1994 (1966):56-57)

These two short descriptions give us a glimpse of the village size and the Iñupiat lifestyle before 1959. Most of the houses were sod ones, although during the 1940s and 1950s, some residents started to build wooden frame houses. Some of these are still standing today. The Kivalina IRA Vice-President remembers these houses (see appendix e for a complete description):

“It’s a top layer of the tundra cut up in blocks, lined up against a wooden frame, made of drift wood. Of course we had nails by then so they used nails to put the frame... hold the frame together. We used to use pigs a long time ago. But uh it would be single room, the floor was wooden, wooden plats, I can remember those plats were 4 inches wide and they were tow and grooved type that were put together and laid on the ground, that was our floor” (Kivalina 2010).

During this early period, the lives of Kivalina Iñupiat changed from seasonal migratory life to (semi-)sedentary life. Camps in the tundra are still used nowadays for leisure activities, necessity shelters while travelling from villages to villages, or for the seasonal subsistence practices (see chapter 3, section 3; also appendix a, map 2). Camps are used for one to several days, sometimes weeks, making the Iñupiat of Kivalina people who move a lot, but in different manners than their ancestors.

These transformations are another cause of the contemporary relocation situation. Before the foundation of a school on the island, families were living half of their time in the inland camps, and the other half along the shore. With the creation of the settlement, the island became the main place where people live, the starting point for every activity in

the region. Perhaps, the other biggest change which transformed Kivalina residents' lifestyle is the question of the landownership, a critical issue when considering relocation.

On January 3 1959, the former territory of Alaska becomes a state of the United-States of America, after a long political battle and multiple lobbying procedures in the federal capital Washington D.C (Naske, Slotnick 1987). One of the greatest issues for the new State is to find financial sources to sustain its administration and government agencies²⁰. Since the beginning of colonization of Alaska, this has been a central issue (Haycox 2002). Another major characteristic of the new administration was its legal aptitude to select land. This did not go without difficulty, as the native populations were not inclined to see a newly formed government for which they could not vote overtake their ancestral lands. As Haycox explains, "As the State began making its selection in 1959 and 1960, Natives grew increasingly alarmed, for many of the selections involved land that Natives had used for various purposes since time immemorial and was therefore subject to aboriginal title²¹, which had not been extinguished by Congress" (2002:277). The apotheosis of this tendency took place when Prudhoe Bay oilfields were discovered in the mid-1960s and when the Alaskan pipeline was planned, creating a vast native land rights movement that led to the settlement of a congressional act, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), organizing the Alaskan lands repartition. In Morgan's words:

"The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was signed into law by President Richard Nixon on December 18, 1971. Won without racial violence, it was the largest Indian settlement in history, giving Alaska's indigenous people clear title to 40 million acres (equal roughly to two percent of all the land in the United States) and a cash award of \$962.5 million. [...] The legislation had been a compromise. No one was completely happy with it but, considering the alternatives, it was a remarkable victory. In the *Tundra Times*²² Howard Rock hailed it as "the beginning

²⁰ According to the American uses, "agency" refers here to any federal, state, regional administrative institution.

²¹ David S. Case and David A. Voluck describe the aboriginal title as following: "According to the principle of Federal Indian law, aboriginal title (also called "Indian title" or "Indian right of occupancy") is first of all group or tribal title. It differs from fee simple title in that aboriginal title is only the right of exclusive occupancy and does not include the ultimate fee, the ability to convey the occupied land freely. Aboriginal occupants may sell their lands, but only the federal government or those authorized by it may purchase such lands. This basic rule is founded on early principles of international law" (2002:36).

²² The *Tundra Times* is one of the very first newspapers whose editor was a Native leader, Howard Rock. It has been the public tribune for important political debates in Alaska. Its last edition was in 1997. "The tundra Times was the voice of Alaska Natives from 1962 to 1997. It reported on events that transformed the Alaska Native way of life, including settlement of land claims, founding of Native corporations and the transfer of health and social services to Native-operated nonprofits," <http://ttip.tuzzy.org/index.htm>, 11/22/2010 20:54.

of a great era for the Native people of Alaska,” but he realized that managing it would be a heavy burden” (Morgan, 1988: 222).

Passionate debates about the benefits and the political, economic, and human right implications of this Act has since then filled numerous publications and discussions (e.g. McBeath, Morehouse 1994:97-115). Some scholars perceive the act as the direct result of Alaskan colonial policies, arguing that “the basic government ideology behind ANCSA is the final assimilation of Alaska Natives” (Schweitzer & Lee, 1997:68). Haycox wrote few years ago:

“Regarded as a great victory by most Native groups when it passed in 1971, [it] has been criticized in recent years as an act of cultural genocide: it has forced Natives to learn to think in terms of profit capitalism because they are stockholders in development corporations, and it has compelled the leadership cadre to become corporate and portfolio managers. But some commentators argue that the act’s benefits, which include economic and political empowerment, outweigh the costs (2002: XIII).

Concerning the relocation topic, the stakes of ANCSA were the creation of regional corporations to manage on behalf of Native populations the financial resources and the land distributions resulting from the Act. Each individual who could prove his or her three quarter percent of native blood, according to the United State Laws, became a shareholder in the corporation from his or her region. In the Northwest Arctic region, NANA Regional Corporation, Inc. is one of the thirteen regional corporations created under the ANCSA in settlement of Alaska Native Land Claims. NANA was created as a private company that was given the role of supervising parts of the financial and land wealth of Iñupiat from the Northwest Arctic Borough, a Home Rule Borough since 1987. Therefore, NANA assumes an equivocal role, a mix of corporate capitalism, as well as social and traditional leadership. In other words, corporations’ position is contradictory. They are responsible for the land protection and for generating profits. This ambivalence is reinforced by the dependency of a major part of the Northwest region’s populations on subsistence activities. This is the case in Kivalina where hunting, wild berries and plant picking, and fishing activities organize the lives of many local residents. Studies (Burch 1985; Magdanz, Braem, Robbins, and Koster 2009) have however shown that the subsistence production is decreasing, in contrast to the increasing population growth-rate. This can be seen as a direct consequence of ANCSA which transformed a subsistence economy into a mixed cash economy, along with the increasing influence of American capitalist economy. Many residents of Kivalina consider those changes as beneficial. They would consider suggestions of going back to

a subsistence economy as unrealistic, nonsensical, or even insulting. They have adopted and adapted some of the “benefits of the white society.” What Kivalina leaders lobby for is the right to continue their subsistence practices, while dealing with contemporary modern ways of leaving. ANCSA and the land claims still nourish actual discussions when it comes to relocation.

One of the main struggles in the relocation process is to find land on which to relocate. After the ANCSA, village corporations were created. They were designed to rule and oversee the management of land owned by the village authorities. The question of self-government and land management became more complex. Case and Voluck suggest “the question of Native self-government has been complicated by several factors. For example, both historically and later, Alaska Native communities have been encouraged to incorporate as municipalities under territorial or state law. Section 14(c) (3) of the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) also seems designed to promote this policy by requiring that village corporation land be conveyed to State-incorporated municipalities”. In the case of Kivalina, two political and institutional authorities share the leadership of the village. The first is the IRA Council, created under the section 16 of the federal Indian Reorganization Act (Case, Voluck 2002:320) and following the Constitution and By-laws of the Native Village of Kivalina (1940). The second is the City Council, created when the village of Kivalina and its surrounding lands were incorporated as a city of the State of Alaska in 1969. Local members of the leading families and its elders²³ explain that after the creation of NANA Regional Corporation, some of the heads of NANA visited Kivalina to discuss with the local authorities. They suggested Kivalina land would be better managed by their corporation which had more resources. Benefits from its management would be greater for the shareholders of Kivalina, as a local council member explains it:

“ANCSA was passed in 1971. Soon after a group of leaders, regional leaders came and told us that every village would be able to form its own corporation, and that’s what we did. Every village did that. The regional corporation leaders they said that, if you can be able to stand on your own two feet it’ll be better if you merge with the regional corporation and form this regional corporation. Otherwise you’re gonna run out of money and you’re gonna become bankrupt and you’re, you’ll no longer exist. They convinced enough of our people to tell us that we needed to become part of the Nana regional corporation” (Kivalina 2010)

The forefathers of the present-day leaders’ generation were not prepared to negotiate such deals and lacked knowledge about the political procedures and the corporation

²³ In Kivalina, any individual from 55 years old and up is considered as an elder.

functioning involved in a land transfer of this nature. This episode can be interpreted as an encounter between two cultures and worldviews. The first was oriented toward profit and management goals, although NANA Corporation had in its early days a social role that nowadays is diminished and transformed. The Public Services director from the NWAB remembers that “the administration at the time was very progressive and did a lot of things for the folk [...]. The administrations changed and NANA, the board structure changed [...] and became different, things became different” (Kotzebue, 2010). The second type of worldview was to seek political and social leadership of Kivalina, a small village where people live mainly on subsistence. Feeling that they were making the right choice, Kivalina leaders transferred the ownership of the land surrounding Kivalina Island. The former IRA administrator and current council member remembers that:

“they had no idea. Would just sprung on them just like that. There was no explanation, the only thing they got was uh the regional corporation board of directors you know some members, we had two on the board. They came to the village, just when our own village corporation was being formed also, getting started and NANAs representatives convinced the people in Kivalina that if they did not merge with NANA that they would lose everything. And so they merge. They didn’t know what the heck they were doing. And later on you know, working with the same elders and explaining you know just basic stuff to them they realized that they were lied to by these people and they had good grass. They didn’t convince my dad. He knew, because he had a VISTA²⁴ working with them. He knew they were being coned and he fought it but he was outnumbered in the village” (Kivalina 2010).

As a result, and considering the contemporary relocation process, Kivalina authorities would now have to go through administrative procedures with the regional corporation to acquire or exchange land for relocation. The exception is Kiniktuuraq, a site located on the coast, a few miles south of Kivalina (appendix a, map 3) which is located within the City boundaries. Since these land ownership changes, 5 elections have been held to decide what option should be chosen between not moving at all, relocating, and if relocation is chosen, to which site. In 2000, a last election resulted in a majority of voters choosing the relocation option to a site known as Kiniktuuraq. Six years later, an official report stated that this site was not suitable (U.S ACOE 2006). The situation has not changed since then. What consequences this immobility had on the relocation process and the Kivalina residents is the subject of the two next chapters.

²⁴For more information: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp>, accessed 1/17/2011.

CHAPTER 2

A Contemporary Episode of Relocation

1. Relocation Becomes a Collective Project

Relocation as a project has been discussed for several decades in Kivalina. These discussions were sequenced by numerous meetings and projects by consultants to define which orientation the relocation projects should take, and how it should be undertaken. The will to relocate was first mentioned in the early 1910s, but it really became a collective concern several decades later. A first collective discussion was held during a community meeting in 1953. An election took place to decide if the village should be relocated or not, and resulted in half of the voters wanting to move and the other half voting to stay. Two storms in 1970 and 1976 (Gray 2010b) caused concern among Kivalina residents. No decisions were taken until the early 1990s, when the State of Alaska coastal planners raised the question of “community improvements,” in other words, installing water and sewer in the village. The Kivalina IRA Vice-President remembers:

“So the subject never really came up again until the late 80s early 90s when the State of Alaska brought up the subject of providing water and sewer here in Kivalina and they did a feasibility study and they said it’s too expensive to build here, we can’t put water and sewer here it’s too expensive and so the city council at the time once again brought the subject of uh having relocation decision come from the community again”. (Kivalina 2009)

In 1992, a second election was held under the guidance of the Kivalina Relocation Planning Committee (KRPC). A majority of the voters decided the village should be relocated. Then in 1998, a third election was held to decide to which new site the village should be relocated. The voters chose the site of Igrugaivik southeast of Kivalina near the Wullik River. In parallel, a report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) was issued (1998). The ACOE conducted geological surveys and results showed a large quantity of ice or permafrost in the chosen area. As a result, another election was held during April 2000 where the Kivalina residents who participated²⁵ chose Kinikturaaq, across the southern channel, as the new site. In 2001, another vote took place and the voters chose a layout for the new village. Five years later, after several meetings with local authorities and the public, the ACOE issued a planning report (2006) which would provide organizational guidelines for the relocation planning and an official documentation for local authorities to lobby for state and federal funding. This is where the relocation process came to a halt, as the report found Kinikturaaq was not suitable

²⁵ Only members of the Tribe recognized under the IRA were allowed to vote, as the IRA Council was responsible of approving the election. The teachers living in Kivalina were excluded from the vote.

due to geological, and especially flood risks. Still today, this assessment is questioned local authorities recalling the knowledge of their forefathers (see chapter 3, section 4-5).

In the following years and until now, one of the main issues for coastal relocation planning was the lack of federal leading agency (GAO 2003, 2009). During the same period, other significant storms occurred between 2004 and 2007 causing erosion and flooding in the village of Kivalina. The State of Legislature, meanwhile, created and designated the Immediate Action Work Group (IAWG) as the leading institution to manage projects such as relocation *Climate Change Strategy*²⁶ became the official guideline. In 2007, the former Alaskan Governor Palin signed the creation of the Climate Change Sub-Cabinet which advises the Office of the Alaska Governor on “the preparation and implementation of an Alaskan climate change strategy to address its *Climate Change Strategy* (2008). The Immediate Action Work Group was formed with the aim to “address known threats to communities caused by coastal erosion, thawing permafrost, flooding, and fires” (IAWG 2009:1). The Immediate Action Workgroup is a new institutional actor in the institutional arena (Olivier de Sardan 1995:173-185; 2005:185-197) of the relocation process. Other actors in this arena include, for example, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and NANA Corporation Inc. which owns the lands surrounding Kivalina. It constitutes the State of Alaska’s response to the issue of erosion in villages such as in Kivalina. The state planner in charge of coastal indigenous villages explains: “the whole purpose of that working group under the climate change subcabinet was to address the needs of the communities that are most imperiled by climate change impacts and of course Kivalina is one of them” (Anchorage 2010).

The Kivalina Consensus Building Project that took place in Kivalina during September 2009 to July 2010 was the first phase of a planning project within the Alaska Climate Change Impact Mitigation Program and a direct result of the recommendations made by the IAWG. The Kivalina Consensus Building Project was funded by a 150’000 dollar grant available for each of six villages identified by the IAWG where relocation is considered²⁷. These six villages were chosen out of the 9 previously identified by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, a federal institution which makes recommendations directly to the U.S. Congress (GAO 2003, 2009).

²⁶ <http://www.climatechange.alaska.gov/>, accessed 12/29/2010.

²⁷ The six villages are Kivalina, Shishmaref, Koyukuk, Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, and Newtok.

The next sections describe two of the main meetings held in Kivalina for the project. Descriptions of discussions which occurred during the meetings, contextual information about the locations where those meetings were held, the projects backgrounds, and description of participants, are described here in order to explain in what atmosphere the relocation was discussed. From these discussions, several main themes about the relocation process can be raised which will be analyzed in chapter three. These two meetings and the Consensus Project can be interpreted as an episode in the sequence of events that mark the relocation process since the 1990s, when local political authorities defined it as a project.

2. The Kivalina Consensus Building Project

The Kivalina Consensus Building Project²⁸ started in Kivalina in September 2009. It consisted of meeting between state planner accompanying an independent consultant working for the State administration and the City of Kivalina with local residents. The purpose was to decide which direction the relocation project should take, as well as to put together a situation assessment of the relocation process in Kivalina. Every project nowadays intervenes in an environment that has already known several interventions and remains marked by them (Long 2001:13; Olivier de Sardan 2005:137). In that sense, the Consensus Building Project followed numerous meetings, surveys, and official reports (i.e. ASCG 2005; City of Kivalina 2008; DOWL Engineers 1994; Gao 2009, 2003; Golder Associates 1997; U.S ACOE 2007, 2006a, 2006 b, 1998; NOAA 2004; WFLHD 2008) that had the relocation of Kivalina as a main subject during the last two decades. The first phase of the consensus building project was a door-to-door survey, as “during the consultant’s first visit to Kivalina for this project, it became clear that most residents did not attend public meetings” (Gray 2010b:4). At his arrival in the village, he went to the Kivalina city building to take his directives from the Kivalina city administrator in charge of linking the project leader with the local inhabitants. The City administrator works for the City Council the governing body of the City of Kivalina incorporated to the State of Alaska in 1969. Giving directives to the consensus project leader, the City Council was willing to avoid mentioning the relocation with the villagers and focus the effort on natural hazards and local environmental changes. The council members knew that Kivalina residents were tired of hearing about relocation and expressed a certain *fatigue* towards project which seem never to become reality.

²⁸ <http://commerce.alaska.gov/dca/planning/accimp/Kivalina.htm>

Including these requirements in his project, the contractor went to every houses in the village to talk with the family members about their views of the ongoing situation in Kivalina. Holding a folder, the man was walking from house to house and knocking at the doors of the qanitchaq, the acrtic entry. Acording to him, most of the people he talked to were willing to share their view of the situation and provided information on natural hazards, their expectation for infrstructure improvement, and even shared some information on the relocation process. Some expressed tiredness of adressing these issues with government representatives. The reasons mentioned were for example that each time a new project was undertaken in the village involving villagers, new individuals were leading and managing them. In consequence, the Kivalina inhabitants had to repeat their story each time all over again. One of the people who spoke to the project leader was a local whaling captain and former local authority member. He explained, about the consultant's visit:

“when [he] wants to talk to me, I said no, I don't want to talk to you anymore, I don't want to talk about anything anymore, I don't want you... I almost say get out of here. But he was talking, he was wet talk a little to me and I get interested and we talk what the community need what the City need to do and the Ira need to do” (Kivalina, 2009).

After having finished his door-to-door survey, the next step for the project leader was to meet with the village authorities and inhabitants to decide which orientation the project should take and how it could benefit the local population. This led to the first *community meeting* for the Kivalina Consensus Building Project, following the meeting between the contractor and the Kivalina city Council. The main goals of this first meeting were “to provide an opportunity for community residents to identify concerns , discuss potential solutions to the problems facing the community and to help shape how the project would be implemented” (Gray 2010a). On the evening of October 1, the villagers were invited to join the meeting in the Kivalina Community Hall²⁹.

In this hall where the Consensus Building Project is organized, only a few chairs of the several raws installed facing the south east wall were occupied. On the right hand side of the entrance, a group of young women and children were sitting on a bench, their back against the walls of the hall. A few young men were also standing at the back of the hall. The benches emptied as the meeting proceeded. The contractor presented himself and his project. He was the Consensus Building Project leader, a consultant for the City of

²⁹ In Kivalina, official public meetings with state and federal agents are held in the Community Hall as well as in the bingo hall, and the McQueen school gym.

Kivalina. He comes from from Southeast Alaska and worked many years as contractor and planner for the oil and gaz industry and coastal projects management involving state and regional authorities. He started working with Iñupiat people in the 1990s and worked in the Northwest Alaska region before this Consensus Project. That is one of the primary reasons why he was chosen out of two different contractor's project answering a Kivalina City demand. He remembered it took him a long time to be trusted by the Iñupiat he worked with: "I was working as a coordinator for oil and gas reviews and so I delt government level from the State of Alaska to Iñupiaq people. And at least, in the beginning, total mistrust. I was the State of Alaska and then it took me probably ten years until about the year 2000 befor I really got trust" (Kivalina 2010). Now it is October 1, 2009 and he had to again build trust with villagers, this time in Kivalina. Hoping it will help him to break the ice - the atmosphere was tense and everybody in the hall was silent – he explained that the first time he heard about Kivalina, was when he received a carved mask with the inscription "Kivalina" on it. He knew that several individuals from the village carve masks, rings, and decorating objects that they sell through gift shops in Kotzebue, or directly to visitors, workers, or tourists in Kivalina.

The audience remained silent and the consultant went on with his explanation, presenting the reasons for him to be in Kivalina. He had been mandated by the City Council to build consensus amongst the resident to decide the future orientation of village improvement and relocation. He insisted this project was a project designed for the village, by the village inhabitants: "You know what's in the future for you, what do you want for the future. And what is interesting about this project, [naming the state planning agent] you can correct me if I'm wrong, I don't know of any other project for Kivalina that is done by Kivalina. It's usually the Army Corps [of Engineers] telling you things or someone coming in and telling you something". He later added: "This project is a Kivalina project and you know 99 percent of the projects in Rural Alaska are some agency telling you what to do and as I went around talking to members of the community that was real—it was a consistent message to me: we are tired of people from the outside coming here and telling us what to do and there was all sorts of examples" (Kivalina 2009).

The project leader continued by explaining he was "an outsider" and would remain it. Therefore he would need the help of the villagers, pushing for *participation* of everyone. He then asked the people to present themselves and went around the hall, asking each

person who they were and where they came from. The individuals on the chairs answered, but at the back no one said a word. Facing the contractor were two elders member of the City Council; a whaling captain³⁰, member of the Relocation Committee, the Subsistence Committee, and former member of the local government; Maniilaq's Environmental coordinator; her husband, a member of the Security Department at the NWAB; the Vice-mayor, former principal at McQueen School and the current City Mayor. These people, with a few other individuals, were representing the village of Kivalina. A Community Planner and Coastal Area specialist represented the Northwest Arctic Borough, the regional government related to the State of Alaska. Two representatives from the Division of Community & Regional Affairs at the State of Alaska administration were also attending the meeting. They were also involved in the Alaska Climate Change Impact Mitigation Program. They came to Kivalina to provide their services and expertise to the local authorities and support to the consensus project leader. Beside the Kivalina political authorities and state representatives, there was also a documentary filmmaker³¹ who videotaped the whole meeting. I was sitting at the back of the hall. The consultant continued his presentation by underlining the increasing number of official reports that had been produced about the Kivalina relocation. He explained that technical language was usually used in those reports and he understood that not many people were able to understand it. He added that it would be part of his job to turn these official reports into plain english. He finished his introduction by saying he was impressed by the type of information he got from the door-to-door survey:

“The people gave me way more information that I would get. I thought I would get a lot of local knowledge and traditional knowledge, the stuff I can't read in the books. But I got everything. Everything you can imagine people are thinking about it [the relocation and natural hazards]. You live here and you know what you want for your future” (Kivalina 2009).

The Consensus Building Project consultant then called upon the State of Alaska Land Planner to speak. She greeted everyone in the hall and said: “Thank you again and I just want to thank you again. I want to repeat the sentiment again and I've worked for the State of Alaska for about 6 years and I don't consider myself as bureaucrat. I do the

³⁰ Inupiat in Kivalina hunt whales, like in other northern village of Arctic Alaska, such as Point Hope, Waiwright, Nuiqsut or Barrow. Kivalina is however, the only whaling community in the Northwest Arctic Borough. In the North Slope, whaling teams and their captain catch several bowhead whales every year. The last whale in Kivalina was caught in 1994. This does not stop the hunters and their captains from getting ready every spring for whaling season, starting with the blessing of the equipment ceremony, an important one for captains and hunters.

³¹ Her documentary, *Losing Ground* is still a work in progress. For more information see <http://media.gfem.org/node/11366>, accessed 12/13/2010.

work I do because I love helping people and I want to provide assistance” (Kivalina 2009). She then reaffirmed the state government’s vision that the relocation process had to come from the people; it was a local folks decisions. She mentioned Newtok as an example, the village of Southwest Alaska which is being actually relocated. She described the role of her institution as following:

“We bring together all the different agencies that bring elements and funding for a new community. By the whole time the community has been at the head of the able and driving force. So to talk to you about anything that happens in your future, I want you to understand that you are the ones that are driving it and in agreement. And that’s what brings us to Glenn’s project” (Kivalina 2009).

During the following minutes, she explained the project’s details using technical vocabulary and administrative abbreviations. She also gave some context about the State climate change political approach. Before turning back to the project leader, she summarized and explained that this project should articulate a strategy for the villagers to decide where they see themselves in twenty years. She finished by hoping that everybody would be actively engaged with the project. After a few questions to the State agent, the project leader spoke to the audience and said:

“Just again on your agenda, you can look at the project approach but I think a real important part of this is to try to reach a *consensus*. Even if we don’t, we at least know where we agree. And with any issue, and you guys are facing a lot of issue, it’s always good to find out where we agree. Because I think, it’s human nature to think of the places where you don’t agree and focus on that. When... If you start focusing on the areas where everyone agrees, then you can build on that” (Kivalina 2009).

He explained that the next part of the meeting and the project was where the villagers could express their concerns. After a moment of silence, a man asked: “What exactly is this project? ‘cause you got... obviously you got government agencies to work with City and IRA Council, but what is it, how does it relate to the people? Why are we here?” (Kivalina 2009). The project leader took a few minutes to again explain the whole project insisting on the need for consensus. After an altercation³² between a council members and an elder, the State planner explained that the permanent settlement of Kivalina, like many other villages, originated from the construction of BIA School (see chapter 2). The city vice mayor then asked if it was not the federal government’s responsibility to relocate Kivalina. The City contractor and the state planner both

³² The altercation mainly focused on the role of the City and the IRA Council, the two local governing bodies, within the relocation process of the village and on the leaderships role of the two institutional bodies.

responded by insisting that consensus was needed, the latter insisting that “it’s a two party responsibility, because if the community wants government to be engaged, the community has got to be cohesive. [...] You cannot have a government come in and do everything for the community without the community’s full participation” (Kivalina 2009).

Years passing, frustration, local politics, and difficult inter-institutional relations have brought the relocation process to a halt. These were the comments made by the Manillaq Environmental Coordinator, the current IRA Council President at this meeting. This following excerpt is long, but some of the ideas raised lay at the heart of this thesis’ argument. Providing the entire intervention is therefore necessary:

“The way things happen that halted the relocation effort and discussion was the funding. That 2006 report, Corps of Engineers’ report halted that relocation efforts and I don’t know what it was, but [they] didn’t know how to relate it back to the community. But the Corps of engineers did hold a public meeting at the gym giving an initial report and since that report, they didn’t tell them that this isn’t the final report, this is what we came up with and this is how it is. And from that report, then the evacuation and... what you call that evacuation road and planning was initiated from that report because they saw that even if Kivalina want to move, even if it was voted on, the Corp of Engineers is not going to assist in Kivalina to move to that preferred site, because of this and this and this. And so when the current IRA and City Council got the report, it sounded like relocation wasn’t an option anymore and so if that wasn’t an option, then we needed to develop an evacuation plan and so we did and we practiced it, but when it was time to evacuate, it wasn’t followed. So after the evacuation plan they started talking about the evacuation road end even that was halted and you will find that in the reports. The road was halted for this reason and that reasons. And so... last year 2008 report.

Every effort that they... City and IRA tried to make in addressing these problems has been halted by the Corps, or by a study, or by something that’s done outside of Kivalina. And so with all of this you know... discouragement, so to speak. Not being able to do what we want to do, not being able to relocate, not being able to provide for our children, homes and a better access to sanitation; all these hopes and dreams just plumed and died. And so our community leaders refuse to listen to anymore... In 2000 it was all hyped up, we’re gonna move... awesome. And then all of sudden... boom you are not moving and it just killed the dreams that these people have and they just... they don’t trust any outside agencies, they don’t want to listen to what you have to say anymore, they don’t want to come to the meeting anymore. It’s just like you killed their dreams. It’s gone. Don’t talk to me about this, I don’ even want to think about, it.

So... it’s like you come to the community right now and people are... you see they’re at the end of a fatigue kind of a syndrome, where they are just tired and burn out and they are tired about talking about this and tired about wishing and dreaming and they are tired of going nowhere with all their planning and get this thing moving. So it’s battle fatigue, and [...] this is the end result according to them. And so you come today and you want to hear what they have to say, but

you're not gonna get that. You're gonna get a lot of discouragement, a lot of confusion, a lot of mistrust, a lot of who cares attitude and we then still have to deal with sickness. It's like they are stuck here and it feels that way. We need to somehow build their dreams again, we need to somehow give them a vision again, some kind of hope again, that thing will get better, that here will be water and sewer, that there will be places to build for the children and grandchildren.

This is like going back to square one, but you got all the studies already and you have people with their own idea ready. But all of this discouragement and all of this ... just not listened to what the people have to say has divided families, has divided community, have divided ideas they have, all kind of different... Now they want to move here, now they want to do this. The thing that we started out with in the beginning, when I was way way young, way back then, all these things were option. Now too, they are all options again. And these same people that went through this process, they don't want to go through that again. All they want to do is provide for their children, provide for water and sewer. And in their minds, they don't see the point of talking to them again. It's not going to happen. Their dreams and visions have died and we need to resurrect or give them new hopes or new visions that things will... can get better for this community" (Kivalina 2009).

The rest of the meeting was dedicated to discussions about this intervention and about potential options for the relocation process³³. One idea was suggest by a City council member and elder of the village. She suggested that for the next step of the project, teams of residents should work and specific topics concerning relocation. This suggestion constituted the organizational guideline for the followings Consensus Building project meetings and workshops with residents.

3. Building Consensus among Kivalina Residents

Following the first public community meeting attended by 16 people, out of whom about half were "outsiders"³⁴ according to the list of presence³⁵, another community meeting and two workshops were organized by the consultant in Kivalina. The second workshop served also as the last meeting for the project.

As the first meeting purpose was to give residents an opportunity to express their concerns and decide which orientation the consensus project should take, the second meeting held on November 11, 2009 was to comment on the *Situation Assessment* report. This assessment provides a detailed overview of the existing documentation and official reports focusing on the relocation process (Gray 2010c). Before the meeting, the

³³ A summary of these options can be found in Gray 2010b and Gray 2010c.

³⁴ I use the term "outsiders" here in reference to a comment the city administrator made. She explained to me that many of the people attending the meeting were not from Kivalina. She added "you were all there" referring to "outsiders" who were in Kivalina at that time (a journalist, a student, and four government institutional representatives).

³⁵ There were also roughly 2 to 5 people who were present without signing.

consultant made himself available for individual comments. This time, a smaller group of residents came to the meeting. During this second meeting, individuals provided some ideas for getting larger turnout at future meetings. One idea was to provide door prizes at the end of the meeting, so people would stay until the end. Another was to cancel bingo for the meeting night. Bingo is largely attended in Kivalina by elders and younger people during the week and Saturday. Sunday is a religious day in Kivalina and the bingo hall is closed. Bingo is the only public activity aside from church services in the village and is popular among residents. Exception exists for fervent Friends Church members – the Quaker’s church in Kivalina, the other church being The Episcopal Church³⁶ – who see gaming as unacceptable. A third suggestion was not to pass any written material before the meeting, otherwise many residents would feel no need to come to the meeting as they already have access to the information (Gray 2010c).

The first workshop of the Consensus Building Project constitutes a corner stone in the recent development of the relocation project and planning process. This time, information about the meeting was more accessible to the public, in contrast to the two first meetings. Several information sheets about the hour, the location, and the purposes of the meeting were placarded in the Kivalina city office, the post office, and the Kivalina Native Store. The consensus project leader also announced the meeting on the CB and VHF, making sure that most of the villagers would get the information. Indeed, most of the houses have either a VHF or CB radio, some households even possess both of them. These radios are used to announce important news in the villages, arrivals of planes, birthday wishes, prayers, or to call a kid for bed or dinner. It was therefore a privileged communication channel enabling the consultant to reach most of the residents. More than 110 people came to the meeting in the McQueen high school gym on January 28, 2010. Teams were built and they discussed options and issues, starting from four different themes: relocation, evacuation road and shelter, natural hazards, and current site issues.

This first workshop was held in the McQueen School gym during the evening. At the entrance of the gym, each participant received a ticket which would be used later for door prizes. Several prizes were available, notably a plane ticket on Alaska Airlines, the Alaskan main airline company. At one side of the gym, metallic bleachers were positioned in a half circle around a table. In the second part of the gym, several folding

³⁶ The Episcopal Church is the United States’ Anglican branch.

tables were waiting for the participants. Kids were palying and running around. Some residents were staring at a poster showing an image of their island with a bridge to another computer-designed smaller island in the middle of the lagoon. This image showed space for new housing on the new island, a small harbour between the existing island and the new one, and two bridges, one from Kivalina island to the virtual one, and another one from the virtual island to the tundra³⁷. One of the residents asked another if he knew that the evacuation route which would enable Kivalina residents to leave the island in case of flooding or high waves would cost over 20 million dollars. Another man estimated that this new idea of building an island was not realistic. The strong current from the Kivalina and Wullik rivers to the south channel would erode the island and the roads. He believed that a road at the shallowest part of the lagoon would be more feasible. Residents were starting to enter the gym. The consultant was holding folders and distributed documents to the each participant. They were the meeting's guidelines and propositions, and a draft of his report for the City of Kivalina. Two other men were welcoming the villagers. Both were from the young NWAB administration³⁸.

The first was the Community Planner and Coastal Specialist who had been present at the first community meeting in October 2009. The other one was a village planner who worked with the village authorities to form a planning committee. Both worked for the planning department of NWAB. As the people entered, they congregated in the bleachers. Families sat together and waited for the consultant to start the meeting. First, he asked an elder and City Council member to pronounce an introductory prayer. In every public political meeting I went to, IRA and City joint council meeting with the representatives of the Red Dog mine, City council meetings, even potlucks, all began with a prayer. At the beginning of the first public meeting, the consultant had not asked for any prayer. This time things were different. The elder asked for every participant to worktogether and reach a *consensus* to address the challenges that villagers were facing. The prayer said, the consultant presented the project and the individuals who accompanied him. He explained that “during my [door-to-door] survey someone told me that you’ve been studied to death” (Kivalina 2009). Another person told him he wished he had a taperecorder so he would not have to repeat the same things all over again. Consequently, the consultatnt insisted on the fact that “unlike most projects, this project

³⁷ This was an unofficial proposition that was given to the consultant by one of his acquaintance who works in a state planning agency and imagined the lay out.

³⁸ “The Borough was incorporated as a First Class Borough in 1986 and became a Home Rule Borough in 1987,” <http://www.nwabor.org/aboutus.html>, accessed 12/21/10.

[had] been designed to get the input of Kivalina residents rather than have an outsider tell the village what it should do” (Gray 2010c attachment A January 28, 2010:1). After having summarized his situation assessment of the relocation process (see Gray 2010c attachment A January 28, 2010:2-3), he proceeded to a first drawing of lot for door prizes. Some people then left the gym, mostly young men and women. The consultant then suggested that participants should form teams and join the tables to begin the workshop.

Members of one of the main families stayed together forming a first group. They took the evacuation road and shelter theme. The second group was managed by Manillaq’s environmental coordinator, the new IRA Council President. They focused on natural hazards. Her husband took the third group with the help of an elder and city council member. One of the borough planners sat at the same table. They discussed the relocation of the village. The fourth and last group was led by the Kivalina city Mayor and they discussed the actual site issues. The consultant and the two planners went from table to table to provide their help to participants. After approximately one hour of discussions, the consultant asked the groups to join him back at the bleachers and to choose one delegate who would present to the assembly the poster with on it the main aspects of their discussion they were asked to prepare. The recommendations made by the groups would be discussed among each team between January and April 2010 and would be then formulated as final recommendations. These will could serve as “basis for the future community planning” (Gray 2010c attachment A January 28, 2010:3). Each team provided numerous ideas and recommandaions that are consultable in the Consensus Project Final Report (Gray 2010c). For our purpose, only the relocation team recommandation are considered here. Six different ones were formulated: local village government to take lead (preferably the tribe); need to lead the people; need to work with state and federal agencies; resolve current site issues; keep building the hope and keep the agreement; consider global warming. These 6 elements were presented by the relocation team facilitator. He said, while presenting the poster: “the local government needs to take the lead, preferably the tribe to work with state and federal agencies. If we put the responsibility for this village on the tribe, the tribe can step up and work with the State... They need to assure responsibility for the people and do what they are supposed to do”. He added, “We need to keep the hope alive. There were many elections and nothing has changed. If the same process goes on, pretty soon everybody is gonna be

gone. Agreement is important between everyone” (Kivalina 2009). He then explained that he just had come home from Kotzebue, the town south of Kivalina where he was working during the week. He had travelled by snow machine following the coast and he could see “nothing but water”. The Chukchi Sea which used to freeze in the region between October and December was ice-free. For him it was clear, “global warming issues are here and we can’t avoid it anymore”. He finished by saying “we need to resolve the current site issues³⁹. If we are here another ten years⁴⁰, we need improving” (Kivalina 2009). A last idea suggested during the meeting was to expand the village to a new site instead of relocating every single house and all infrastructures. The meeting ended and everyone returned home, while some of the young people helped the consultant and the two borough planners to tidy the gym.



Figure 5: The second consensus building project meeting in the McQueen highschool gym. This group of participant focus on the “Relocating the community” theme. On the white sheet, one can read “keep building the hope, and keep the agreement” and “global warming”.

The last workshop, the last community meeting of the project, occurred on May 20, 2010 and was again widely attended. Teams presented their ideas and recommendations. The meeting ended with discussions about the next steps for relocation. The possibility

³⁹ The current site issues are mainly: lack of space and housing, lack of a sewer system and lack of running water, outside of the teachers’ houses; need for a new dumpsite not exposed to wind and flooding; no law enforcement; no recreation for teenagers and kids; and not enough workforce in the local administration.

⁴⁰ 10 to 15 years is the Kivalina master plan estimation for the beginning of relocation. In fact, it might even take longer before anything moves.

of developing a “strategic community plan” (Gray 2010c) was suggested. In addition, a letter from the relocation team was read to the assembly, reaffirming the need for “unified voices” or consensus and to move on with the relocation effort (see appendix d). The Consensus Project lasted 10 months, between September 2009 and July 2010.

Several main topics appear in this description of the Consensus Building Project. They inform us about what is at stake for this project in particular, and for the relocation process in general. Perhaps the first one is a feeling that the efforts for relocation has been *blocked* and that everything has to be reconsidered from scratch. It is a first reference to the idea of a chain of events which includes blockages and advances. The second results from the first one. It is the need for *hope*, due to a *battle fatigue* mentioned by the Manillaq environmental coordinator. This idea was relayed in the last official State report about Kivalina in the statement “the lack of progress towards relocation has taken a toll on the community, and many people have expressed a sense of hopelessness” (Gray 2010c). A third one is the difficulty of *communication between stakeholders*. The fourth includes the questions of *participation* and *consensus*. As we have seen through the precedent excerpts, the idea of consensus is tightly linked to the one of participation. This idea lays at the heart of the contemporary process of relocation. Its analysis will provide another cause for the blockage of the relocation process in Kivalina. A fifth and last main topic is *climate change*. Several questions can be raised here such as why is consensus needed? How can we understand the blockage of the process? Or how is climate change being used in the discourses about relocation? These questions, starting from the themes listed above, constitute the core of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Negotiating a Motionless Relocation

An approach focusing on conflicts of interests and representations generated by the relocation process reveals some of the local and external social, cultural, and political project's dynamics. For Olivier de Sardan, "conflicts figure among the best ways of penetrating the intricacies of society, of revealing its structures, norms, and codes, or of highlighting the strategies and logics of actors or of groups" (2005:189). In other words, underlying the tensions lines that exist within the planning process of relocation, its internal power relationships, and its heterogeneity in terms of interests and representation (Fresia 2009) is a way to understand the causes that halted the relocation process. In this chapter, following this perspective, I analyze the themes related to relocation identified previously. I focus specifically on the causes and consequences of the process' blockage, as they situate the Kivalina relocation in the context of historical and contemporary relocation cases in Alaska.

1. Environmental Relocations in Alaska

Relocation of indigenous communities is a long-term reality in Alaska. Literature about village relocation such as Kivalina is scarce, though. Most of the literature on relocation, resettlement, and the environment deals with large or massive population displacement (e.g. Piguet 2008; McAdam 2010), rather than 400 people in Kivalina. It focuses also on geographical areas far different from Arctic Alaska (Schweitzer, Marino 2005; Gemenne 2010). For Oliver-Smith, "although the place and peoples are geographically and culturally distant and the sociopolitical environments and cause of dislocation often dissimilar, there remain a number of common concerns and processes" (2009:132). However, most of the publications about relocation focuses on displacement and actual moves of population, rather than a lack of move.

The recent European Science Foundation's research program "Move by the State" focused on migration and resettlement throughout the circumpolar North. This research insists on political, institutional, and sociocultural causes for population movement. Recent results⁴¹ from this research show that relocations have happened all over Alaska. They have taken place in myriad forms, included a variety of individual and institutional choices (Mikow 2010). Development-induced resettlement in the case of the Prudhoe

⁴¹See also: Patrick Durrer (2010), "Moving an Inupiaq Village: Negotiating Relocation and Socio-environmental Changes in Kivalina, Arctic Alaska" in *Move by the State: perspectives on Relocation and Resettlement in the Circumpolar North*, <http://www.alaska.edu/move/projects/moving-an-inupiaq-village/>, accessed 1/7/2011.

Bay discovery, the construction of army infrastructures that required the inhabitants of Kaktovik to resettle not less than three times (Mikow 2010), the World War II population displacement in the Aleutian Islands, are examples among about a hundred cases of relocations in the state since the early 1900s. In Canada, the tendency is similar. For instance, Damas quoting Vallee in the introduction of his book on transformation of Inuit settlements in the Canadian central Arctic, distinguishes two types of population resettlement processes in the Arctic: relocation and migration. The first is a “planned movement of a group of people, whose destination is determined by some outside agency”. The second is a “movement undertaken by individuals without the intervention of an outside agency” (Damas 2002:3). The relocation of Kivalina is situated between those two definitions, as relocations advocates actively orient the relocation planning process, while they have to cope with institutional constraints.

Relocation in Kivalina is being debated by all stakeholders of the planning process and by the media. However, no actual relocation of the village is taking place. For now, the relocation – the actual move of the village – concerns more the level of discourses than the one of actions. The differences between practices and discourses, which lies at the heart of the anthropological approach, can be described in Kivalina as a motionless relocation. An ethnography of a motionless relocation requires to understand how the lack of movement is negotiated by local and institutional actors. For example, the Consensus Building Project is a government intervention involving institutional constraints and local strategies. The analysis of this project and the historical, institutional, political, and socio-cultural dynamics which have generated the lack of move, all question the commonly accepted environmental hazards causes for relocation in Northwest Alaska. In the scientific debates about environment and migration, the fact that environmental deteriorations are often by-products of other realities is now well-recognized (Piguet 2008:3; see also McAdam 2010). However, the influence of media, for instance Internet and television, has widely disseminated the idea that climate change is the main reason for population displacement in the Arctic. In the past years, the notion of “environmentally induced relocation” has gained popularity in Alaska to describe relocation needs in locations where erosion or flooding are severe. In the South-Alaska, natural hazards such as the tsunami following the 1964 earthquake forced residents of Chenega to rebuild their village is an example which contributed to the dissemination of the “environmental” understanding of population movement in Alaska. More recently,

villages like Newtok, Shishmaref, or Kivalina have received media and political attention, reinforcing the tendency.

In contrast, the analysis of the Kivalina relocation contributes to refining our understanding of “environmentally and climate change induced relocations” in North Alaska. In other words, and within this broader context, a comparison of Kivalina’s relocation with other contemporary relocation projects enables us to explain the particular position this relocation has within the group of Alaskan villages threatened by erosion and natural hazards. It also underlines the sociopolitical, historical and institutional dynamics of relocations.

The Yup’ik coastal village of Newtok in Southwest Alaska is in the process of being relocated due to advancing erosion from the Ninglick River (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2005:31). As in Kivalina, Newtok’s authorities and villagers are involved in a relocation process. “State and federal government agencies [...] are struggling to provide protection to the communities while they grapple with the need to work out a relocation process. [...] Newtok is the most advanced in its effort, having identified a relocation site and acquired the land through act of Congress” (Bronen 2008:30-31). The Newtok Traditional Council, the only political authority in the village, has been working with a State planner – the same person who was in Kivalina for the Consensus Building Project – to coordinate the work of these multiple agencies involved with Newtok’s relocation. The village is being relocated and serves as an example for institutional workers and political committee when they address the relocation issue with other village residents. For instance, the IAWG has stated that the planning of Kivalina’s effort for relocation should be “based on the Newtok Planning Group’s experience, document, [which] provide/orient other communities and agency efforts about how to plan and conduct a successful relocation effort” (IAWG 2008:30), revealing a need for the standardization of the procedures. This was also the case, during the last workshop and community meeting of the Consensus Project in Kivalina (see chapter 2). An Anchorage lawyer who had enrolled in research programs at the University of Alaska and United Nations University, presented her work on climigration and environmental migration (e.g Bronen 2008, 2009) to the public. She mainly focused on the way Newtok authorities have managed their workrelations with the Alaska State and U.S. federal

government institutions representatives⁴². The use of Newtok's relocation as a model show that relocation is possible. The State of Alaska planners push local authorities, as in Kivalina, to work together.

However, efforts of establishing guidelines in an area where everything has to be thought out from the beginning do not take into account the fact that the situation is different in every village. For instance, the Newtok traditional Council is the only power authority in the village. In Kivalina, there are two local figures of political power: the City Council is the State's political branch in the village and the IRA Council is the Federal branch. The regional political authority, the Northwest Arctic Borough, plays also a role. The existence of three political powers can be understood as of the main institutional characteristics that complicates the relocation planning in Kivalina, both on a local political scale and in the relations between relocation activists and the state and federal agents.

The residents of Shishmaref, a village south of Kivalina, are also concerned with environmental hazards. The history of colonisation and settlement in this village shows that a BIA school was again one of the main reason for creating a village in its present location. The first discussions on relocation planning occurred in the 1970s (Marino 2009). Contemporary issues include moving infrastructure that is threatened by erosion, and securing funding to implement the planning decisions. Shishmaref's case is widely used by the media and scholars as an example of early "climate change refugee" on the North American continent (e.g Kostigen 2008; Sutter 2009). According to anthropologist Marino, "Shishmaref is a small village, yet it exists today as an early case study of potential environmental migrants coping with both a changing climate and a bureaucratic system that is difficult to engage. Shishmaref in effect is the proverbial canary in the coalmine" (Marino 2009:42). The "canary" metaphor was also used by Kivalina IRA vice-president in the documentary film *Kivalina*⁴³: "climate change is happening here [...] right in front of our eyes", and "we're the canary in the mine". Like the Shishmaref relocation activists, a group of Kivalina leaders have successfully marketed their situation to the media, exposing their village to journalists, scholars, and

⁴² <http://www.ehs.unu.edu/article/read/574>; <http://www.alaska.edu/epscor/highlights/Bronen-Highlight.pdf>; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2009/apr/17/alaska-migration-climate-change>, accessed 12/21/2010

⁴³ Stéphane Poule, Nicolas Koutsikas, *Kivalina*, Georama TV 2009. The documentary is in French.

planners. One of the results was the diffusion of the idea of “environmentally induced relocation”.

2. Environment and the Media: Kivalina is a Crowded Field

“There are so many people around here, I don’t know if it’s Army Corps of Engineers, Bryce...” (Monet 2010).

Iñupiat are one of the American indigenous groups that have been frequently studied and written about. They have always fascinated the public, notably for the rigor of their lives in cold regions of the Arctic (Haycox 2006:24). With the Greenlandic Kalaallit and the Canadian Inuit, the Iñupiat of Alaska⁴⁴ have also long interested anthropologists and ethnographers. Early writers such as Boas (1888, 1901), Mauss (1906), Gabus (1947), or Malaurie (1956) focused part of their work on Arctic populations, mainly in Canada and Greenland, and their relation to the environment. This “tradition” of northern ethnographies has been carried on to the present days and recent works continue to feed contemporary anthropological research on Arctic populations (e.g. Nutall 2002; Damas 2002; Stern, Stevenson 2006; Visart de Bocarmé, Petit 2008). In Alaska, Rasmussen – who journeyed from Greenland to Alaska with dog teams – wrote an early ethnographical account of his experiences with local populations (1933) which still remains a reference today. Numerous explorers and researchers followed and shared some times with Iñupiaq populations, writing accounts of their experience and scientific contributions of ethnographical value (e.g Andrews 1939; Brower 1942; Fejes 1994 (1966); Chance 1990; Krupnik, Jolly 2002; Brewster 2004). Nowadays, a town like Barrow on the North Slope, which is a privileged place for Arctic natural and environmental sciences research, sees crews of scientists fly in to work in the area every summer.

In Kivalina, since the discussion about the relocation process in the 1990s, numerous contractors and engineers have come to village. In addition, and since the launch of the “Climate change lawsuit”, reporters, journalist, and researchers have spent a few days to several weeks working on the relocation and climate change issue (erosion, environmental hazards) and interviewing people. Marino and Schweitzer recently noted about their work in Shishmaref, a village located southwest of Kivalina:

⁴⁴ The terms « Kalaallit », « Inuit » and « Iñupiat » designate indigenous people of the three countries. « Eskimo » is no longer considered an acceptable term by people and most researchers (Schweitzer, Lee 1997:29). The origins of these people go back to the Thule migration which spread from Siberia to north Greenland.

“Arguably, indigenous people of the Arctic are some of the most severely affected populations worldwide of global climate change. With the rise in public discourse of climate change and the overwhelming desire to document the phenomenon, rural Alaska has been inundated with journalists, photographers, scientists, and politicians over the last twenty years in unprecedented numbers. These travelers to the north all seem eager to engage in a discussion and, even better, get a photo opportunity with the first victims of climate change” (2009:212).

The relocation of Kivalina has become a coveted object, creating a *crowded field* in which climate change and environmental hazards are studied and documented. Chabrol, when analyzing her research on AIDS in Botswana, describes her field as “over-researched” (2008). I prefer to use the term “crowded field”, as it underlines that relocation is a coveted object not only for researchers, but also for journalists, reporters, artists, consultants, and State and federal administration representatives.

During the summer and fall of 2009, three filming crews came to work in Kivalina; the first was comprised of a producer from New York University and her filming assistant from Australia. They were shooting in the village and spent most of their time with families. Their stay lasted more than a month and it was their third visit to Kivalina. The two women were interested in the “human face” of the Kivalina case, and presented their project as “a feature documentary about America’s first climate change refugee”⁴⁵. Another crew, a Canadian one, came to Kivalina during the month of August. They had already been working in the village and came back to the village 5 times total. This crew is preparing a bigger production, focusing on the Climate Change lawsuit Kivalina’s authorities are involved with. A third crew had also been filming in Kivalina. Climate change and cultural changes are the main topics of this documentary’s first short version called *Losing Ground* (Monet 2009). Aside these film crews, numerous reporters and journalists from media such as *The Reader’s Digest*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Smithsonian*, *The Arctic Sounder*, *Anchorage Daily News*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *CNN*, *CBS*, *BBC* or *Al Jazeera* came to Kivalina or called for information. In 2009, a German artist lived during August 2009 in Kivalina and she came back during the summer of 2010. Her work consisted in making plaster molding of parts of the island and the tundra; a way to create an artistic testimony of a “disappearing island”⁴⁶. All these individuals were actors of the crowded field and contributed to diffuse the idea of relocation caused by environmental hazards and changes.

⁴⁵ <http://www.thekivalinaproject.com/>, accessed 11/8/2010. Underlining is mine.

⁴⁶ <http://www.erdshollenarchiv.de/index.php/alaskakivalina/unterseite-test>, 11/8/2010.

Locally anchored, this trend needs also to be understood from a global perspective, since contemporary climate changes have been recognized as an issue that need the attention of regional, national, and international administrative and political authorities (ACIA; 2004, 2005; IPCC 2007; UNESCO 2008). Statements such “earth’s climate is changing, with the global temperature now rising at a rate unprecedented in the experience of modern human society. These climate changes [...] are being experienced particularly intensely in the Arctic” (ACIA, 2005: iii) contribute to draw the attention of international news firms and institutional actors toward northern communities such as Kivalina. As a result, newspaper articles, blogs, or websites disseminate ideas like that expressed in this headline: “Inuit Are Living on the Front Lines of Climate Change” (Hanley, 2009). Other rhetorical descriptions include the idea that the Iñupiat are living in “melting villages” (Darlington 2009), or that “Inuit are the canary in the mine” (DPA, 2009).

This crowded field situation has its roots in the social and political life of this village and in the ways issues like relocation are handled. Plaintiffs of the climate change lawsuit ask that the defendants pay for the relocation of Kivalina. The media exposure was therefore a choice made by local leaders to address relocation. The City and IRA administration workers often talk about a “much needed attention” (Kivalina 2010), specifying that “the more the people know about the situation, the better it is” (Kivalina 2009). The minutes from a City Council meeting in January 2008 also shows it clearly:

“The main concern is to get all the publicity we can get from all over the State. This will get us into public eye; we need money to seek funds. If the Council feels we need to pass this resolution, then we should. This is a Global Warming Lawsuit; will be part of the lawsuit if we agree to this. If or once we win this lawsuit, then we can begin to get money to help us relocate” (2008: 7B).

The Kivalina IRA and City councils’ attorney explained a similar idea in the following way:

“The more Kivalina is able to communicate with the public on that issue [climate change lawsuit and relocation], the better off they are in the struggle. And certainly, the lawsuit isn’t the only reason why the media or people are interested in what’s happening here” (Kivalina 2010).

What these statements underline is a local individual and group strategy: the use of media as a tool to attract external attention and potential support. The former IRA administrator and council member, a gatekeeper (Crang, Cook 2007:21) in the village explains it in the following way:

“the media attention, you know all that other stuff that are not part of my job, you know. I wish it didn’t come with. I wish it didn’t have to happen. But at the same time, they have to happen you know. We have to let people know outside of the village, what’s going on. Because I’d still rather not be in front of the camera. I’d still rather not have this... to explain things; I’d rather have you know the Council be able to speak about these things” (Kivalina, 2010)

The emic rhetoric behind this strategy is as follows: the federal state and State of Alaska were not giving enough attention to the situation of the village of Kivalina. The launch of a lawsuit that has brought attention and international exposure to the village pushes the regional, national and federal authorities to consider the relocation of Kivalina. Recently, the United States Government Accountability Office in a report to the United States of America Congress has identified Kivalina as one of the communities “facing imminent flooding and erosion threats” (GAO 2009:12, 2003).

The idea of a crowded field is therefore not only a construction for the purpose of anthropological research. It pre-exists the ethnographic project and has concrete consequences on the life of local residents. The fatigue expressed in the Consensus Building Project meetings is namely created by the tiredness of villagers hearing repeatedly the same questions, being interviewed, and being followed in their everyday activities.



Figure 6. Two filming crews are shooting during a Kivalina City Council meeting, August 2009.

Another crowded field characteristic is the question of who will be interviewed and who exposes himself or herself to the journalists and researchers, journalistic and anthropological methods being close, even though their objectives may differ (Boller, Bihr 2010). The media analysis, undertaken at the beginning of this research, showed that the names of the same people were appearing in most of the newspaper articles and documentary films. Most of the people who were interviewed and who exposed themselves to the media, provided testimonies, and answered to the journalists' questions are local relocations activists and gatekeepers. They belong to the political and religious leader groups in the village. To get their cause to be heard, they made the choice to accept the consequences, such as research fatigue, of this media exposure. For instance, the Vice-President of Kivalina IRA Council explained me he had to learn how to speak to the media and answer the questions of journalists (Kivalina 2009). He, like others in the village, developed a way to address the relocation process through the media.

This media exposure also reveals a regional political struggle to decide who will diffuse specific information and how it will be done. For instance, different regional and state media such as the regional newspapers *The Arctic Sounder* and *The Hunter*, the latter being published by NANA Corporation, can diffuse information which could influence key actors and stakeholders in their choices on the relocation process' orientation (e.g. "Eroding Alaska village appeals lawsuit's dismissal", AC 2010). Controlling information becomes a way to orient the relocation process. In other words, the media exposure, which has generated a crowded field, can be understood as a local and regional political struggle to gain control over the discourses on relocation and to influence future planning strategies (Marino 2009). As a result of the political will for media coverage, the idea of "environmental induced relocation" was largely disseminated in the village, the local and regional institutions, and in the State of Alaska administration. At the end, what the relocation's blockage analysis shows, and especially the crowded field analysis, is that the relocation of a village is clearly not only an issue about natural hazard. Environmental hazards and climate change are only adding to previous existing local historical, social, economic, and political dynamics.

As the next section shows, these concepts of "environmentally induced relocation" or "environmental relocation" do not accurately render the complexity of the relocation in

Kivalina. Indeed, they evacuate the social, political, economical, and historical dimensions which remain at the root of the current relocation context.

3. The Contemporary Challenges of Relocation in Kivalina⁴⁷

The current Kivalina City boundaries are a direct result of the history of land claims and ANCSA (see chapter 1). These boundaries include Kivalina Island, without the landing strip, a part of the lagoon, and a piece of land across the southern channel named *Kiniktuuraq* (see appendix a, map 3). From their position on this island surrounded by the Chukchi Sea, the Wullik and Kivalina rivers' mouth, the Northwest tundra, and the Delong Mountains, the Iñupiaq residents of the village consider the natural environment as fundamental to their livelihood. They now also consider it to be a threat. For the last two decades, these people have been enduring severe erosion, flooding, and high waves hitting the island on which their village is located, due to the late formation of fall slush ice. These environmental hazards are not new. However, their impacts on Kivalina Island and residents are increasing, as climate and local environmental changes affect this village. In the past years, Kivalina has been consistently identified as one of the imperiled communities (GAO 2009:12, 2003; IAWG 2008, 2009).

Meanwhile, the residents of Kivalina have been again talking about relocating the entire community to a safer place. Then from 1950 to 2000, several attempts to decide whether the Kivalina residents should relocate or not (and where to) have experienced setbacks, resulting in the status quo discussed in the preceding chapter. As of 2011, no relocation site has received the support of all the different actors and parties involved in the project. These include institutions such as federal and state agencies, most notably the US Army Corps of Engineers; residents willing to move and those who want to stay; local and regional authorities, such as the Northwest Arctic Borough, the City Council, and the IRA Council of Kivalina; as well as the NANA Corporation which currently owns most of the land surrounding Kivalina, as we have seen earlier. In the near future, the efforts will be focused on a possible evacuation road, but the direction of this road has yet to be chosen.

⁴⁷ This part of second chapter is the result of a discussion I had with Enoch Adams Jr., the vice-president of the Kivalina IRA Council in his house, and a collaboration that followed. I wrote the initial text and he corrected and commented it. "Findings Ways to Move: the Social Challenges of Relocation in Kivalina, Northwest Alaska", the original version of this text will be published in Lovecraft, A. L., and H. Eicken (to appear in October 2011), as section 6.5 in Chapter 6 "The Arctic Coastal Margin" (David Atkinson and Peter Schweitzer). This present version has been adapted for the purpose of the narration.

Behind the technical, scientific, political, and management issues that have to be resolved to relocate this village, lay a historical and socio-cultural background that has to be added to the frame of the relocation planning process. The colonial past of the Northwest area (see chapter 1) has profoundly changed the lives of the Iñupiaq people in Kivalina. Adaptation has long been a criterion for life in the Arctic. Nevertheless, the creation of a village on an island which used to be a seasonal settlement has been the origin of difficulties that are now serious social and political issues for the residents. The increasing population is probably foremost among these problems. As the 1960s saw the numbers of inhabitants in Kivalina pass a hundred, the last local census of 2009 counts more than 420 individuals. On an island 400 feet wide and 5 miles long which is shrinking due to coastal erosion, there is little space to build new housing which would allow young people to raise their families and welcome relatives and friends in their own home. Several married couples left Kivalina because of the lack of economic opportunities, but would be willing to come back to Kivalina to settle. The former IRA administrator estimated a number of 200 people who would come back to the village, if there was enough room (Kivalina 2010). However, as there is no space available, they have to live outside of their hometown.

This issue has economic consequences; there is no room for young people to start businesses which would help to increase their incomes and support the subsistence economy. The relocation project also aims to provide more space and enable some social changes, and give Kivalina residents a choice to leave or to stay in their village. The island is a good starting point for fishing and hunting excursions; it exists at the intersection of caribou hunting grounds, rivers which are rich in fish, and the ocean that provides access to marine mammals such as seal, walrus, beluga, and bowhead whale. For this last reason, some local residents do not want to imagine leaving the island: « I don't think we ever going to relocate. It's home. All we need is running water in the homes" (a City Council member, Kivalina 2009). Another important aspect of the relocation planning process is the choosing of a site that meets several technical and hydro-geological criteria such as solid ground, no exposure to flooding or permafrost melting, as well as livelihood necessities.

As Kivalina residents' mix-economy relies on subsistence activities including seasonal land and marine mammals hunting, fishing, trapping, and plant gathering (Burch 1985; Magdanz 2009), local leaders seek a new village site location that would provide the

villagers good access to these natural resources. Canada based researcher Ronald Niesen (1993 quoted in Schweitzer, Marino 2005:16), in his study about a Cree village relocation in James Bay, has shown that the resettlement of villages can be a source of subsistence activity diminution, impacting the everyday lives of residents. Inupiat in Kivalina do not use dog teams anymore, and their travel is mostly accomplished on ATV vehicles, engine boats, and snow machines. This means also that the new site would have to fit the use of these transportation methods. These are crucial to the subsistence activities which represent an important part of the life and identity of Kivalina inhabitants. At the present time, work has been done to improve the living quality in this village. A new health clinic has been built in Kivalina, supervised by the Maniilaq Association. Numerous houses have been renovated and a new water plant is under construction. The erosion problem has also been partly taken care of with the construction of a new “seawall” (figure 1), giving the inhabitants relief for the fall period when storms hit the island. Following the Kivalina relocation planning, the U.S. Corps of Engineers Alaska District has overseen the construction of a rock revetment on the ocean side of the island, in order to protect the infrastructures from high tidal waves and erosion. These transformations go along with some other social and health issues, such as the lack of a sewer system or of running water in every house (except the school and the teachers’ housing). Furthermore, the lack of space becomes a source of social tension. These issues are the contemporary reasons that led the villagers to revisit the relocation process and push for it.

These reasons also created a situation where the relocation process came to halt. This blockage has been interpreted by “external observers” such as the Consensus Project consultant or the state administration planners as a lack of consensus between the village relocation activists and the rest of the residents, as well as between the residents. The question is to choose the direction which the relocation process should take. To respond to this situation, planners at the Division of Community and Regional Affairs of the Alaska State imagined the Kivalina Consensus Building Project presented in chapter 2, based on the Newtok relocation case. Several miscommunication problems between stakeholders were identified. These can explain some aspects of the relocation planning halt. These communication problems about expectations, participation, and objectives convinced the relocation team to recommend “to work with state and federal agencies” (see chapter 2 and Gray 2010c). In other words, the need for more collaboration between all entities involved in the process was expressed (see appendix d, Relocation team

letter). One of the issues at the root of this cause of the relocation process' halt concerns the selection of site options "that federal, state, and village officials agree are safe, sustainable, and desirable for the subsistence lifestyle of the villagers" (GAO 2009:2).

Local residents involved in the planning process believe their subsistence activities should not be affected by the move. "The land is what we are" (Kivalina 2009) says the IRA tribal administrator to journalists, reminding the public that these geographical areas have been used by families for numerous generations. This position evokes other relocation situations in Alaska where the "continual desire among Iñupiaq communities to be on their own land" was expressed (Marino, Schweizer 2005:35). As a result, the question of identity and relation to the land is used in the relocation process as a tool by local leaders and relocation activists to express their will to remain on their land and reject the idea of merging into other villages suggested by some relocation planners, a choice that in Kivalina, such as in Shishmaref (Marino, Schweitzer 2005), is not an option:

"That's not gonna work. It's like... Ok here is your house, you live there and then there is your neighbours' house they live there, it's like me asking you to pack up and move next door, to your neighbours' house. It would be intruding, you know. All villages are different, they're not.., we don't have the same life styles. This is where we live, this is who we are, this is what make us who we are" (Kivalina, Council member 2010).

The relocation planning and challenges on Kivalina Island concerns also the uses of the surrounding environment. The changes in land and camp uses during the last decades in Kivalina due to environmental or social⁴⁸ transformation are fundamental to understand how relocation can be considered in this village. Acknowledging this relation between the relocation planning and the land uses leads to two questions: What consequences would the relocation process have on the local perception of what is home? How would the selection of a new village site change the land uses? A Kivalina leader often repeats to the "outsiders" and the media workers that changing location means changing lives. Consequently, one of the main aspects the Kivalina residents who militate for relocation want to maintain through the relocation process is access to their land and camps.

⁴⁸ The number of teenager and young adults who practice subsistence activities seems to decrease, according to local residents who hunt and gather food. A young woman told me, for instance, that she had never seen a living caribou.

4. Relocation at Home: A Land Use Issue⁴⁹

“They want to make us live like them” (a Kivalina hunter 2010).

The domestic space of Kivalina residents can be understood as a network of geographical locations, trails, and village infrastructure, year-round and seasonal subsistence camps, and mining infrastructure such as the Red Dog Mine road and port (see appendix a, map 2). This network is travelled over and used by inhabitants on a regular or daily basis. The Kivalina residents can therefore be considered as semi-sedentary people, in contrast to the common assumption. Consequently, the relocation analysis requires a broad perception of what portion of land is used by Kivalina residents. By considering which portion of land should be included in the relocation debates, we are able to refine our understanding of certain difficulties encountered in the planning process. This approach contrasts with the analytical frameworks which consider relocation only from the perspective of the village and its island barriers. The discussions and misunderstandings between individual and institutional stakeholders related to the question of where to relocate illustrates the issue.



Figure 7: Fishing on the Wullik River, 2010. Courtesy of Janet Mitchell

⁴⁹ This part has been adapted from an oral presentation for the Annual meeting of the Alaska Anthropological Association: Durrer Patrick, 2010, «An Island as Home: Considering "Domestic Space" from the House to the Land in Kivalina, Alaska», Anthropological Association Annual meeting, Anchorage March 24-27. The subject of the panel was « In and Around the House: Transforming Domestic Spaces in Arctic Alaska and the Russian Far East ».

For Haycox, the environment conditions human history, as “the evolution of people and culture does not take place in a vacuum but in the very real context of the natural landscape and how the people who live in that environment relate to it. The people who inhabit a particular area develop an identity with it, one that helps form their view of themselves (2006:3)”. Once we acknowledge the predominance of the natural environment and its resources in Kivalina residents’ domestic space and lives, we become better able to understand relocation not only from an administrative and engineering perspective, but also as an issue based on the uses of the land, and one that concerns and Iñupiaq lifestyles.

The relocation process is still often considered in an urban, westernized way, focusing only on the island of Kivalina, the “urban” area. In parallel, planners tend to focus on how technically to move the infrastructure and where to, meaning which area would (technically and from an engineering perspective) fit the construction of a new village (e.g. U.S. Army 2006). These approaches tend to leave various pragmatic concerns in the back ground. For instance, the strength of winds in a specific geographical location which would influence the costs of heating houses, or the difficulty for travels during subsistence activities are concerns expressed by local residents. This is a well-recognized fact in Alaska anthropology: understanding domestic space in an indigenous village like Kivalina must include the land uses and the camps (e.g Wisniewski 2007). Therefore, a village like Kivalina is only one part of a broader network of sites that are used by local inhabitants. The camps on the tundra and the camps on the ice near open leads must be incorporated into the framework of relocation. Objects found in houses can illustrate it.

In many houses in Kivalina, everything reminds the visitor of the surrounding environment and subsistence activities. Entering a house, the whaling or hunting tools from the grandfather nailed on the walls; pictures of relatives in the tundra or on the ice hanging next to religious representation of Christ; fishing or hunting equipment stored near the doorway, next to the boots and warm clothes; caribou meat or fish drying next to the stove; binoculars left above the sink, near the kitchen window from which the ocean is visible; or caribou and seal skins drying in the arctic entry, all recall the land and its uses. In one of the Kivalina whaling captain’s house I visited hang, above the kitchen table, numerous pictures of a past whaling season and life at a whaling camp during spring time. The images showed whaling crews paddling in their *umiak*, the

Iñupiaq whaling boat made out of marine mammals' skin and/or wood. The tents at the whaling camp on the ice near the opened lead were visible, behind the individuals posing for the picture. Some other picture were showing details of everyday life at the camp including resting, cooking, and waiting for a whale to show its back. These pictures were surrounded by old tools used to carve harpoons and pieces of carved baleen as well as a big bowhead baleen on which the family's name has been carved. The pictures did not look very new and I asked where they had been taken, especially the ones showing camp sites. The captain's wife answered: "it's just out there, in front of Kivalina. But we don't go there anymore. The ice is too thin, too dangerous. We used to spend weeks out there" (Kivalina 2009). The last whale in Kivalina was caught in 1994. This does not stop the whaling crews to get ready each spring. Most of the villagers prepare themselves each year for the start of the whaling season which begins with the blessing of the hunting equipment after Easter. The date is fixed by the members of the Kivalina whaling association, mainly composed of the local whaling captains. It is an especially important event for the community that must be planned weeks in advance.

The pictures on the wall are not just about "camping" on the ice, but more about spending a period of the year living on the ice, as some of the Iñupiaq whaling crews from North Slope coastal regions are used to doing (e.g. Chance 1990; Brewster 2004; Wohlforth 2004). This difference of perspective is key in understanding the miscommunication regarding planners and villagers' divergent concepts of how « subsistence » should be taken into account with relocation. Hunters and members of their family stay several days to several weeks on the ice, sending teenagers called the "boyers" to get soda pop, coffee, food, or to bring news from or to the village. This particular lifestyle belongs to the modern reality of Kivalina inhabitants and many of them consider the spring season, or whaling season, as the most exciting and joyful one. Whaling camps, such as year round inland camps and shelters, are entirely part of what Kivalina residents who hunt or have the resources to travel the land consider as home, their domestic space. Nevertheless, the use of these camps and especially the whaling camps has changed, along with the changing Arctic sea ice.

The scene described above illustrates how social and environmental changes have in a way transformed what is considered as home in Kivalina. Locations that were used during the spring season for subsistence activities are not used anymore, or in a different

way. The divergent perspectives of land uses between relocation activists and institutional stakeholders are central to understand the relocation process and the causes of its halt. These perspectives are entirely part of the relocation planning and site's selection. It would be tempting to define the limit of the domestic space, in other words the space affected by relocation, by choosing the limits of the island – a western-influenced way of thinking which appears in planning procedures and reports (e.g. U.S. Army 2006). However, the fact that the village is only a part of a network of locations that are used and visited by Kivalina residents questions the common distinction made between the land versus the village, the latter being thought of as the typical parameters that institutional relocation planners need to incorporate in the procedures. The mismanagement of communication as well as the divergent perspectives of stakeholders (relocation activist and local authorities, U.S Army Corps of Engineers, state coastal planners and engineers) about the site selection led to the blockage. In addition, the repetition in time of similar relocation administrative and planning procedures, such as the site selection, have generated frustration for local residents, relocation activists, and state planners.

5. Relocation through Generations: a Battle Fatigue

During the last two decades, Kivalina authorities worked on a site selection to prepare the relocation. *Kiniktuuraq* had been chosen in 2000 through a democratic election as the preferred site for the new village. Most state and federal agencies, along with contractors, were ready to support the effort of relocation. Consequently, in 2000 the majority of the population was expecting the move to occur; it would increase their life conditions. However, the Corps of Engineers stated in 2006 that the chosen site could not be used for the building of a new village for hydro-geological reasons. The whole relocation effort was stopped, and problems related to the relocation are now piling up. After several attempts, many setbacks, numerous public meetings, and an high number of studies and reports issued on different aspects of the relocation (subsistence, health care improvement, energy sustainability, community improvement, coastal management, climate change policies), the problems that are presently discussed are about the same as those discussed in the 1990s: where to go, who wants and needs to move, and how. This situation generates frustration, divergent interests, and conflicts between villagers and stakeholders of relocation, as a resident expressed it during the first Consensus Building Project meeting in Kivalina. The frustration and lack of hope, the “end of a fatigue

syndrome” expressed by the women during the first workshop of the Consensus Project (Kivalina 2009; see chapter 2), as well as relocation activists and extended families’ divergent interests have resulted in a low attendance rate to community meetings about relocation. The Kivalina residents have shown a decreasing interest in agency representatives and projects. The Consensus Building Project has been a turning point in the chain of recent events, about this villagers’ interest for the relocation process. It has managed to gather a large group of people.

This frustration situation recalls what anthropologist Elizabeth Marino experienced in Shishmaref during her fieldworks in the past years. In a recent article, she explained the frustration and consternation of a local resident active in the relocation planning process of his village for many years:

“Today relocation planning efforts are being spear-headed by the IAWG, an organization constructed by the governor’s office which is comprised of a number of state and federal agency representatives. In the last meeting they called for another feasibility study for relocation in Shishmaref, which has caused consternation to Tony Weyiouanna, a Shishmaref resident who has worked on the relocation project for almost ten years. It seems that there is no end to the planning and that as a new cast of government workers takes on the task, the past efforts of local residents disappear” (Marino 2009:46).

The idea that the “effort of local residents disappear”, echoes a comment the mayor of Kivalina made to the Consensus Building consultant. The mayor wished to own a tape recorder so that he would not have to repeat the same things again each time a new contractor or journalist arrives in Kivalina (see chapter 2). This situation has been generated by the presence of many journalists, states or federal workers, researchers, and consultants creating a crowded field (see section 2 in this chapter). The battle fatigue expressed by Kivalina residents also illustrates this feeling, as the current IRA President suggests:

“The term we’ve come up with or been using is “battle fatigue”. We’ve been talking and we’ve been discussing and we’ve been having meetings and we’ve got round and round and round and round the discussion of relocation. We’ve come up with every option we can come up with, we’ve tried to compromise with state and federal agencies and we’ve tried to do everything we can to get this things going. However, every time we make progress either the state or the federal agencies will come up with a reason why we cannot go on. And people in the past used to fill the meeting rooms. But they are so frustrated about having to tell the same story to different people. Sometimes the state and federal agencies will send someone new to go meet with the community. Or they will come up with a suggestion that is not agreeable with the city and Kivalina IRA, or the relocation committee. So they’ve been... a lot of discussions that just go round and round and round, and not

producing anything. So our people are tired of hearing the same thing over and over again from the state and federal agencies” (Kivalina 2010).

Contemporary ways for local Iñupiaq leaders and relocation activists to address the issue of relocation are diverse. Hiring consultants and organizing public meetings, controlling discourses on climate change and relocation in Kivalina and outside the village, filing lawsuits, lobbying in different political and administrative arenas such as the Immediate Action Work Group meetings are examples. Relocation activists follow also trainings in Kotzebue, Fairbanks or Anchorage about environmental hazards on coastal areas or climate changes consequences on coastal planning management. Climate change as a political discourse becomes a tool or a weapon⁵⁰, when lawsuits become involved, for relocation activists to address the issue of relocation and to try to keep the process going. As the first and second chapters detail it, relocation has been considered for several generations in Kivalina. Each generation of relocation activists had their own ways to consider and deal with the need for relocation of their village, in order to give sanitation and space to the residents. Each generation of relocation activists had different solutions in mind, but these are solutions to the same problems. Sanitation, space, and erosion have always been, during the last decades, the driving issues. It is the way those problems are addressed which keeps evolving.

Many individuals remember growing up hearing their parents discussing the matter. The actual IRA president explained that her parents and grandparents had already been talking about relocation:

“Relocation discussions have been happening long before I came around and I told them my grandparents passed away talking about relocation, my uncles passed away, they were on the relocation committee... They all passed away thinking they’re gonna relocate. My parents are old now and they fought the fight, but they are still living in Kivalina. And here I am today talking to you about this when I was telling the State of Alaska. Here I am today talking to you about what needs to be done and I am giving you an update” (Kivalina 2010).

The creation of the Kivalina Relocation Planning Committee (KRPC) was one of the ways chosen by local leaders to address the relocation in the 1990s. Following the discussion concerning a Sate project to install water and sewer systems in the village which resulted in status quo, the City Council proposed a new community wide election on relocation. The two local power institutions of Kivalina, the IRA Council and the

⁵⁰ This idea was suggested to me by Dr. Peter Schweitzer, UAF, December 2010.

City Council got together to form the KRPC. The IRA then-active vice-president remembers:

“And [...] the city proposed it. Soon after the IRA council did the same thing. So they got together and formed the relocation committee made up of members of two members from the city council, two members from the IRA council, one elder from the community, one from the school which was me and one that would be working for some agency of the federal government which was the post office. [...] So we became the Kivalina Relocation Planning Committee” (Kivalina 2010).

The KRPC’s duty was to approach the federal and state institutions (agencies) which would have the financial, technical, political, and human resources to design and plan the relocation of Kivalina. It was the second planning committee that was created, and local Kivalina government members wanted more independence from regional and state institutions in orienting the planning. At the same period, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers Alaska Division, a civil branch of the federal U.S Army which has a long history of engineering in Alaska⁵¹, got involved in the process. The former IRA administrator and actual city Council member remembers how the project evolved:

“We had a lot of communication problems you know, information was not being shared and so, so I requested and MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] between the city, the borough and the native village. [...] And it was just to, just so that everyone understood who had what responsibilities. And so I hired a facilitator who was actually serving more as a mediator, because we had a lot of communication problems, there was a lot of conflict between us and the borough. They were just leaving us out. So and while they were leaving us out of the discussion, they were also letting the tribe know that we should provide, through our access to federal funding, a portion of the 50 per cent match for the preliminary work that the Corps needed to do. So, and it worked for a while. The MOU established for us an understanding of who had what responsibilities and it also formed the relocation planning committee and formed a position for a relocation project coordinator” (Kivalina 2010).

Later on in the research project, the council member gave me more precisions about the procedure:

“The Kivalina IRA Council had responsibilities to its members and recognized that the relocation project would be, in a sense, changing lives, the Tribe hired a mediator to address the communication problems and brought the Kivalina City Council (City), Kivalina IRA Council (IRA), the Northwest Arctic Borough (NAB) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) together in Anchorage to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would essentially organized the Kivalina Relocation Planning Committee (KRPC) and designated responsibilities to the three (3) governing bodies (City/IRA/NAB) and the KRPC. The MOU clearly outlined the responsibilities of each party by consensus. The MOU also established

⁵¹ This institution has been active in Alaska since the purchase of the territory from Russia by the federal American government in 1867. The ACE has been a major actor in building infrastructures in Alaska, and is currently involved in most of the relocation planning and erosion protection activities in coastal Alaska.

the position of a Relocation Planning Coordinator who, by mutual agreement between the three (3) governing bodies, would serve as a central point for communication purposes to disseminate and coordinate communications between the three (3) entities and all agencies, including federal, state and regional at a local level” (email, 2011).

The collaboration between regional, local authorities, and the U.S Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) resulted in the issue of a report, the *Community Improvement Feasibility Report. Kivalina, Alaska* (U.S. ACOE 1998). This report presents three different options, including remaining at the existing site and relocation with two sites proposed. When I asked why the KRPC turned to the ACOE, to the Kivalina IRA vice president and KRPC chairman answered:

“Chairman: they have planning moneys constantly being provided to them by the federal government to do infrastructure type of projects. That’s one of their main duties for Congress, they make plans for infrastructure. They decide they are the agency that also decides whether or not a project will get funding. If the Corps of Engineers says something is feasible, especially in terms of environment, Congress does not question whether or not they should provide funding for projects to be built, for infrastructure to be built.

P: So you see it as a choice that you could make or an option that you had to choose?

Chairman: at the time, they were really the only option we had, because in order for this relocation project to get off... get on his feet, we had to have the federal government involved because the majority of the funds would come from the federal government and because of that the corps of engineers had to become involved. We had no choice to have them become involved” (Kivalina 2010).

As the KRPC chairman explains it, this relocation project was a demand from the local authorities and was not only influenced by external political decisions. The former IRA administrator also remembers that:

“The NAB was asked by the City to take the lead in the relocation project because of the City's lack of knowledge or experience in addressing relocation. The Tribe [IRA] was not directly involved in the beginning but was being designated responsibility only because of our access to federal funds” (email, 2011).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the KRPC had an active role in the relocation process by lobbying the planning institutional staff of federal and state agencies and organizing local meeting, votes, and procedures for the relocation process. With the halt of the process after the issue of the *Relocation Planning Project Master Plan* (U.S ACOE 2006a), the KRPC lost its leading role. During the fieldwork period, the KRPC did not hold any meeting directly related to relocation procedures. Its members did meet with the Kivalina lawyer in the climate change and Red Dog mine lawsuits, though.



Figure 8: The Relocation Planning Committee in the early 2000s, courtesy of Janet Mitchell

During the first workshop of the Kivalina Consensus Building project, I talked to the NWAB village planner who explained he was working on a project, the idea of which was to create a new planning committee under the supervision of the NWAB planning department. The last report issued about Kivalina's relocation states that "the IAWG recommends the community create a planning committee representing various community interests. The purpose of the committee would be to develop a plan outlining what steps the community will take to respond to climate change-related threats" (Gray 2010b:5). What surprises the observer here is that the KRPC was thought to function as such a committee. The issue is that the KRPC is now involved in the lawsuits, and as the village planner of the NWAB explained to me "my boss does not really like the idea of having the KRPC become the committee" (Kivalina 2010). This situation reflects also local realities, as the KRPC is mainly composed by members of one Kivalina extended family, and some residents feel that the organization does not represent their interests. Consequently, the consultant for the Consensus Building Project meeting found out "there was not a consensus among the group whether the existing Kivalina Relocation Planning Committee should develop the community plan or if a new committee should be formed to do it" (Gray 2010a:5). Using the rhetoric of a "need for consensus", the State planners in charge of coastal communities can justify the government's intervention "to help" Kivalina authorities and residents to orient the relocation process.

The demand made by the NWAB planning department for a new local planning committee, following the directives of the IAWG (2008:30; 2009:6)⁵², raises questions: why would it be necessary to make a new planning committee for Kivalina, as there is already one by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska Division in 2006, following a demand from Kivalina authorities? If there is a need to create a new planning committee, who will elaborate it? What would be the role of the Kivalina authorities and would the need for locally anchored planning be feasible? Could also the whole Consensus Building Project be interpreted as a way for the State of Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs Planning and Land Management Department personnel (in charge of coastal relocations on a state level) to engage and position their institution in the Alaskan institutional arena of climate change and relocation? Does existence of the *Master Plan* (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2006), a federal project, push the State of Alaska representatives to launch their own project based on their experience with Newtok Planning Group? Does not the situation reveal an inter-institutional competition for funding, projects, and recognition? These questions cannot be answered here, as our focus is mainly the causes of the relocation process' blockage. They are worth rising however, as they underline a complex institutional landscape. This latter include administrative procedures becoming more complex and that are repeated in time, as the planning process proceeds.

This situation shows a cause of the relocation process's halt. There is a certain lassitude of the individuals involved in the planning process towards administrative procedures and meetings. This lassitude has lead the relocation planning team of the Consensus Project to recommend in its letter read during the last community meeting to "continue to build hope" (see chapter 2, appendix d; see also Gray 2010b). With its demand for a new committee, the NWAB planning department calls for election of a new committee, as was done previously with the KRPC, and which complies with the IAWG guidelines. This is an example of increasing complexity of the institutional climate change and relocation arena as well as repeating bureaucracy and procedures. All give the residents the feeling that nothing is moving forward. This situation can also remind us that the Consensus Building meetings were not largely attended. People expressed tiredness because of hearing the similar procedures and questions over and over again, as new

⁵²"In its 2008 and 2009 reports to the Subcabinet on Climate Change, the IAWG identified the need for community planning efforts by Kivalina and other communities at risk, including establishment of a local planning committee" (Gray 2010a:1).

institutional representatives arrived in Kivalina with new projects. In the end, this analysis of the KRPC's role shows one of the strategies for local leaders and relocation activists to address the relocation process: the creation of a leading relocation committee. At the same time, the analysis of the KRPC's role reveals issues such as inter-institutional competition or regional and local political or relational diverging interests concerning the relocation planning.

Planning procedures have been now going on for several decades. In other words, the questions of relocation planning have been "relocated" through several generations, grinding progress to a halt. In addition, the lack of communication between stakeholders can also be identified as a cause for the blockage:

"P: how did it work between these agencies? You said you had to build communication.

C: They were not talking to each other. And eventually we started to push for interagency cooperation because they were not talking to each other. Even when we had this erosion problem they were not talking to each other. No one did know what the other was doing. Corps of engineers didn't know what DOT... and today they still don't" (City Council member, Kivalina 2010).

As a consequence, residents and relocation activists expressed the feeling of frustration, annoyingness, and for some a lack of hope; the battle fatigue, a side effect of the relocation project. From here on, one can ask: how can the project of developing⁵³ a new village thought to improve the living standards of local inhabitants generate frustration and divergent interests among stakeholders?

6. Relocation Stakeholders and Situations of Interface

"Public involvement is an important part of the site selection process. It includes meeting with the KRPC, public meetings, house to house visits, discussions with community leaders and facility operators, and meeting with classes at McQueen school" (Army Corps of Engineer 2006:97)

Simone Abraham once wrote in a monograph on development that "relatively little attention has been paid to the development efforts made by states within their own territories, and the varying forms of local governance of that development" (1998:1). Since her publication, numerous studies have focused of government and institutional

⁵³ Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan proposes to define development from a fundamentally methodological perspective "as a sum of the social processes induced by voluntarist acts aimed at transforming a social milieu, instigated by institutions or actors who do not belong to the milieu in question, but who seek to mobilize the milieu, and who rely on the milieu in their attempt at grafting resources and/or techniques and/or knowledge" (JPOS 2005:25).

interventions (e.g. Long 2001; Olivier de Sardan 2005; Mosse 2004; Lewis, Mosse 2006). Yet, in the U.S. Arctic regions, anthropological literature remains scarce about recent government interventions. The situation contrasts with for example Canada, where analyses of relations between village residents and government employees have generated significant writings (e.g. Nadasdy 2003; about relocation, for example Damas 2002; Burns 2006). In Alaska, an author like Morrow had opened the way in studying the relations between State representatives and local populations (e.g. 1996), focusing on adaptation and resistance strategies villagers adopted within legal procedures. Focusing on the institutional level, Bodenhorn from Cambridge University who works with Iñupiaq population of the North Slope recently noted⁵⁴ that it is important to look at the structures of agencies, institutions boards, and committee offices. She also considers the study of networks of entities, and the relations between them to be crucial. I would add that the non-existing relations are also to be considered in understanding the stakeholders' role and position within the climate change institutional arena in Northwest Alaska. In that trend, Lynch and Brunner analyze these relationships. For them: "State and federal agencies each have their own distinctive mandates, jurisdictions, and cultures that typically require officials to focus on only part of any problem as viewed from a community perspective. With limited resources and large numbers of communities to attend to, it is questionable whether officials can understand enough of the individual communities' problems to solve them" (2007:108).

To better understand the causes of the relocation process' halt, it is important not to focus the analysis only on a structural level, but also to understand the roles of individual and institutional actors in the process (e.g. Long 2001). The risk would be to perceive local actions about relocation as completely manipulated by external forces, leaving no space for individual actions and strategies. Analytical approaches which focus on the battle between the "good" local residents against the "bad" institutional workers to decide who will be able to orient the future orientation of the relocation are irrelevant. They do not accurately render the complexity of the relocation process in Kivalina. This process is composed by a complex institutional landscape, conflicts of interests within the relocation planning strategic groups (Olivier de Sardan 1995:179; 2005:190) on a village level as well as on an institutional or agency level. It also involves different cultural and social representations of how the relocation should be

⁵⁴ She explained her approach during a conference that was held at International Arctic Research Center on the UAF campus on September 14, 2009.

undertaken. A way to understand this complexity is to focus on conflicts of interests and to analyze the involved parties' ideological representations of the relocation. It is on these levels that the lack of knowledge about various stakeholders' world has led to difficult collaboration and frustration. In other words, the relationships between government representatives, local authorities, relocation activists, and villagers needs attention. In Alaska, and especially in the case of Kivalina, these relationships are often characterized by an attitude pitying the situation of the residents. In the contrary, it can also consist in praising the values of the residents understanding of their relocation issue and capacities of adaptation to their contemporary economic and political challenges.

Analyzing the level of interfaces helps to avoid the influence of such normative approaches on the relocation's blockage analysis. In other words, this means "to question the social dynamics which are generated by the encounter of different spaces – [a federal institutional space, a state and regional space], and a local historic space – each being regulated by specific norms and institutions" (Fresia 2007:112). Meetings between local leaders and Kivalina inhabitants, or meetings between relocation activists and federal or state employees, are both situations of interface. The Consensus Building Project is an example (see chapter 2).

I often heard "the lack of will to decide", or the "culturally anchored will to avoid conflicts" or even "the laziness of the Eskimo people" used as arguments to explain the situation of blockage the inhabitants of Kivalina and their leaders are experiencing. These explanations mostly given by visitors, non-residents, or teachers show a culturalized representation of local Iñupiat's involvement in the relocation process. This perception recalls the "eskimo orientalism" (1995:xi) of Fienup-Riordan in reference to Saïd's work⁵⁵. State and federal agency workers and official reports, also tend to perceive the relocation process through a cultural lens. In other words, when it comes to the land, nature, and subsistence activities, Kivalina Iñupiat residents are consulted, and their expertise is valued. They are asked to participate, for example, in qualitative and quantitative researches (e.g. Magdanz et al. 2009). For the technical, engineering, and administrative characteristics of the relocation process however, there is a tendency of

⁵⁵ Ann Fienup-Riordan explains that the movie industry has forged a specific image of Alaska Iñupiat: "like the representation of the Orient, the representation of the Eskimo origins – in this case the origin of society in the "pure primitive": peaceful, happy, childlike, noble, independent, and free. The Eskimo of the movies is "essential man", stripped of social constraint and High Culture. That twentieth-century Iñupiat [...] men and women were members of complex societies governed by elaborate cultural constraints was unimportant" (1995:xi).

state and federal planners to leave the engineering and administrative procedures only to contractors and engineers, thought to be the only one capable of providing expertise, leaving popular technical knowledge aside (Olivier de Sardan 2005: 159).

In Kivalina, there is an example often used by relocation activists to denounce the lack of attention that is given to their knowledge by contractors and agency representatives in Kivalina. To respond to the erosion problem, the Northwest Arctic Borough planning department decided a seawall would be an effective solution to protect Kivalina island from erosion; the U.S Army Corps of Engineers had stated a few years ago that “the present town site will require coastal erosion protection until relocation is completed” (2006a: 4). Between 2006 and 2007, the Northwest Arctic Borough, with funds from the Denali Commission and the State of Alaska, built a seawall made of cubic wired baskets and plastic material that were filled with sand from the beach. Beside exposing the beach to further erosion, these baskets did not function. Within the days before the seawall’s inauguration, a storm of “regular” strength according to local inhabitants (Swan 2007:4), but described as a severe one in official (e.g. UNESCO 2009:126) and media reports, destroyed a part of the wall. What seems problematic to some residents is that construction workers were warned by a local elder resident that filling baskets with sand from the beach would only worsen the erosion situation. The construction proceeded and the wall failed to protect the village.

Another example occurred during fieldwork at a meeting between the Joint Council (City and IRA) and representatives from the U.S Army Corps of Engineers in Washington. They had come to the village to observe the construction of the seawall and take local news from the relocation effort. During the discussions, the main officer suggested to the local authorities that one of the problems related to the relocation was the displacement of the graveyard. The same officer added that the ACOE had a long experience with cultural issues. For instance, they just had been building mosques in Iraq. He then firmly stated that the cultural issues were a dimension that would have to be taken care of in the relocation process. Two local residents vehemently told him “let us deal with our culture”, reaffirming their will to collaborate on an engineering and administrative level in the relocation planning process. This situation can be understood as another situation of interface. The analysis of these situation of interface reveals power dynamics and political conflicts of interests on a local scale as well as on a regional scale. More specifically, what those two examples underline is one of the main

difficulties in the relocation procedures and planning: the communication between the different individual and institutional actors of the relocation process (federal and state agencies, local political and administrative entities). There is a lack of knowledge about how the state and federal administrations agents work, as well as a lack of understanding of Kivalina residents' expectations and willingness to handle their future.

The causes of the relocation's halt can also be found in the way the ACOE handled the relocation site selection, not including the local perception of land uses, as well as the accumulation of administrative procedures and unfruitful meetings. The current IRA president illustrated it in the following way:

““I was in Anchorage last week and on Thursday the eleventh I sat with the State agencies, it's called the Immediate Action Work Group. And I really didn't know the purpose of that meeting until I got there. And after listening to the state and federal agencies about the updates for the Alaskan rural villages relocation issues, Kivalina's on the top six of the State of Alaska's priorities to discuss relocation, so after listening to them for a couple of hours, these people have never been involved in the process and the State is finally looking at rural Alaskan villages and see what they can do to help the rural Alaskan villages to relocate. So everything is new to them. They don't know anything about this process or the studies or the meetings. So in a brief moment when they asked for an update from Kivalina, I raised my hand and told them we've been... well the thing I started was: when I heard that this meeting was hosted by the Immediate Action Work Group for the state of Alaska, the first thing that came to my mind "Immediate Action", and so far I've heard nothing but what's has already been discussed the last twenty years. And I told them that the planning process has already... is all done, all the studies are done, the planning process is done. Everything is done that needs to get done. The State... the Corps of Engineers said that we should do some studies. So we did some studies. The corps of Engineers said that we should have a comprehensive plan, so we did a comprehensive plan. The corps of Engineers said that we should come up with a model, lay out of our village. So we did that. The corps of Engineers said that we should do this and we should do that, so we've done everything that was needed to be done to get our village relocated. And then when we come to the point where we got to vote to the village where we want to move, everything stopped. So relocation discussions has been happening long before I came around and I told them my grandparents passed away talking about relocation, my uncles passed away, they were on the relocation committee” (Kivalina 2010).

Nevertheless, the causes are not only “external”. Indeed, the Consensus Building Project analysis has underlined local divergent interests. The situation reveals also preexisting local political and relational conflicts, such as the Kivalina population different origins and alliances (Shishmaref, Point Hope, Point Lay, and Noatak; see Burch 1998). Relationships between extended families are also influencing the relocation process. In addition, the existence of two governing bodies can be seen as a source of structural difficulties in the collaboration between stakeholders of the planning process. During

fieldwork, the City Council and administration were mainly controlled by members of one extended family and the IRA Council was “mixed”. Recently, elections and administrative reorganization has given the control over the IRA Council and administration to another family. These lineaments correspond, with exceptions, to other local dynamics such as religious affiliations and political views on relocation (site selection, which institutional actors should be included, etc.). This description is a little schematic and boundaries remain confused without an accurate understanding of the local kinships forms and local political views. The alliances with residents of other villages⁵⁶ or institutional actors are also dimensions that should be further analyzed. It is however clear that extended families relationships and alliances influence the relocation planning.

With this in mind, consultants and State representatives have consistently told me that they believed the Kivalina relocation process was halted because of divisions between two groups of individuals in the village. This perspective is shared by several institutional actors and the State Planner who accompanied the Consensus Project’s consultant explains it as following:

“Well, because the community seems to be very divided right now about what they wanna do. And um, I think, after a lot of years of working with Kivalina other agencies have you know, felt that the community’s at an impasse right now but moving ahead because they don’t know, you know, we wanna move to Kiniktuuraq however um, the Corps of engineers and other agencies have said it’s not a feasible place to develop and it would be extremely expensive and, relocation is such a difficult thing to find, it’s, there’s no dedicated source of money for it so... the first thing you need to do is find a relocation site that’s not gonna be, you know, impossible to develop, that’s not gonna be prohibitively expensive to develop. And Kiniktuuraq has got a lot of issues with it, where you’d have to have a tremendous amount of fill brought in, to even make it developable. So, you know the step one is to find a site that meets the community’s needs, what the community wants, and also is developable by the definition of government agencies or the experts...” (Anchorage, 2010).

This contrasts with the perspective of local residents and relocation activists such as the former IRA administrator and City Council member:

“People in Kivalina, people in Noatak, people in Point Hope, they’re all like up bring on a cooperative rule, we all have these rules, and we all know what they are. These are what our elders say; these are what we will do. We work as a community, you know, as one body of ... one group, you know, one group that are connected to one culture. We work as a community. People on the outside, they don’t have that. You know, for the most part I think they’ve been assimilated. You know if they are

⁵⁶ My ethnographic material and the length of my stay do not allow me to produce a detailed kinship description in Kivalina and the area.

native, they have been assimilated into a different lifestyle. Those are very two different, two different cultures” (Kivalina, 2010).

While it underlines local divergent interests, the focus on local divisions tends to culturalize the relocation blockage’s explanation. On the one hand, the analysis cannot be limited to two different groups of influence in the relocation process, as additional groups of residents have expressed different opinions on where and how to relocate. On the other hand, if conflicts of interests exist in Kivalina, the situation is similar to any human societies or groups where development projects are planned. Indeed, “a development action inevitably gives rise to interactions between social actors belonging to different worlds [...] and whose behavior patterns are regulated by a variety of logics” (Olivier de Sardan 2005:137). At the end, these varieties of logics as well as the political dimension of relocation were not acknowledged. The repeating administrative procedures and the launch of an engineering report (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2006) have both questioned a democratic decision.

According to the State of Alaska coastal planner, because of this “division”, there is a risk that the whole process of site selection would have to be reconsidered, another repetition of administrative procedures (see section 6):

“P: So sites... that means that they have to start all over again?”

S: Yeah I think it’s that, I think you know, I think Kivalina has the reputation of being a hard to understand community, because it tends to be a little more diverse than other communities are, for instance Newtok is primarily made up of a population of people that come from the same ancestors and they’ve been out in that area for a long time and um, Kivalina’s history as I understand it is that different groups have kind of come together there. And that not everybody sees eye to eye in everything, there’s some historical things that are um, sometimes get in the way of the decision making” (SC, State planner, Anchorage 2010).

In light of the above statement, local social dynamics between residents and extended families are thought to be, in the institutional state arena, at the origin of the blockage. In fact, it is more in the relationships between the relocation activists and the state and federal planners that the cause of the blockage can be understood. The use of technical-scientific knowledge and engineering knowledge (Olivier de Sardan 2005:159) has undermined a political decision. Local authorities and the Kivalina residents had given, through local vote procedures, a clear direction to the relocation process. The 2000 vote, which resulted in the choice of Kinikturraq as the preferred relocation site, was a democratic decision taken by Kivalina leaders and villagers. It is according to this vote that the local leaders see their duty as providing a solution following the residents’

choice. The former IRA administrator and City Council member explained it in the following manner:

“P: What would you say to someone that tells you: “why don’t you just move, why don’t you just cooperate”?”

C: Because the people voted in a democratic process, they give us our direction, this where we’re gonna move, that is our goal, that is our purpose. We answer to the people who we work for. They voted. That’s what we will pursue. It doesn’t matter how I feel about things, it doesn’t matter if I didn’t want to move to Kiniktuuraq. I didn’t want to move there. My vote was to stay here, on this island, but the majority voted and that’s where we’re going, and this is our process. If they wanted to move somewhere else, we’d have to go through the whole thing all over again. I mean we’d have all of these studies that have already been done, but we’d also have to do more studies for whatever site uh if they chose to change their minds” (Kivalina 2009)

At the end, the launch of the 2006 official *Master Plan* report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska Division is thought to be, by all relocation activists from each political side or familial alliances, at the origin of the relocation process’s halt. The report states that Kiniktuuraq, the site (see appendix a, map 3) chosen by a democratic vote is not suitable because of the quality of the ground – a melting permafrost. Later on, by a process that remains unclear the area was designated as flooding zone (U.S. Army 2006:77). This designation is still questioned today by local authorities, as local history does not show any flooding on this site since 1885 (Mitchell 2010).

7. An Institutional Response to the Blockage: Consensus and Participation

“The community’s got to be the superhero, not the agency” (State Planner, Anchorage 2010)

Following the arguments of the previous section, the need for consensus expressed by planners during the Consensus Building Project can be understood as the result of a local democratic choice being questioned by institutional actors. The IAWG directives for the planning of relocation processes ask for “full” consensus, based on Newtok’s relocation. This idea of consensus, which was raised several times by government representatives, the consultant, and local leaders during the two consensus meetings analyzed in chapter 2 is problematic. Consensus appeared in the Consensus Building Project meetings to be the main problem that needs to be solved to overcome the blockage. However, this notion of consensus takes on different significations according to its context of enunciation. This concept is “embedded in specific cultural, ideological, and cognitive frameworks as well as in extremely localized networks of actors, power dynamics, and bureaucratic strategies” (Fresia 2011:3). Consensus between the village

authorities and relocation activists, consensus between government representatives and local leaders, or consensus between institutional workers are three different shapes the idea of consensus can cover in the case of Kivalina's relocation. The two first ones were expressed in the latest official state report on Kivalina's relocation as "the community will need to find new ways to build internal agreement and new methods to collaborate with state and federal agencies" (Gray 2010b). The third one is best illustrated with the Immediate Action Work Group (IAWG) institutional actor which rallies Federal, State, regional, and local institutional representatives, such as in the Newtok's relocation planning effort. The IAWG is an arena where institutional actors working on relocation meet: "the IAWG includes both state and federal agencies, and they often involve local governments. If anything, the IAWG is a rare innovation for agency staff to address things that are beyond their individual mandates. The Newtok effort was a major project of the IAWG" (Consensus Project consultant, email, 2011).

When focusing on the relationship between local leaders and state institutional representatives working on relocation, the idea of consensus can be analyzed as an administrative tool. Expressing the need for consensus based on the experience of Newtok's relocation is a way to administratively manage the relocation project by creating administrative models or procedures for relocation of rural villages. In other words, it seems that the state and federal administrations, based especially on IAWG (2008; 2009) and the GAO (2003; 2009)⁵⁷ recommendations try to establish a standardized procedure on "how to relocate a village". It would enable the administration to provide rationalized help, in the sense that procedures, duties, source of funding, or institutional roles of each agency involved would be clarified. This approach tends however to overshadow the local particularities and difficulties of each village, as if relocation procedures "could just be given or transferred from one context to the other, and as if social reality was transparent and static (when stakeholders know themselves it is actually constructed, dynamic, and interactive)" (Fresia 2011: 6). The Kivalina authorities' roles in the process and their representations of how the village should be moved are different than Newtok authorities' ones. For some key local relocation activists, there is no need to build consensus, as a democratic decision has already given a clear direction to the process. This difference between state planners and local leaders' approach shows "competing values and cultural interpretations in constant

⁵⁷ The Government Accountability Office reports directly to the U.S. Congress.

negotiation [to define] what the needs” (Marino 2009:43) for the present and the future are. It is only by focusing also on the differences between the processes that the relocation planning process’ halt in Kivalina can be understood.

The 1911 Kivalina school report (Replogle 1911, see chapter 1) shows clearly that relocation has been in discussion for almost a century in Kivalina and history of colonialism gives a first cause for the contemporary need for relocation. It is important however not to essentialize or reify the relocation as a project with existing clear administrative procedures from the beginning of the relocation discussions. The relocation of Kivalina is more a sort of nebula of collective and individual actions, which has become, under the influence of local, state, and federal administrative procedures and reports issues, a coherent project requiring funding and planning. In that sense, the relocation was first and foremost a local social movement to increase quality of life. Therefore, the relocation of Kivalina can be understood as “a voluntary attempt at inducing social change” (Olivier de Sardan 2005:38). It became a collective project when local authorities and state planners made the choice to involve the local public in Kivalina, answering to an individual demand formulated in a letter to the authorities. Becoming a collective project, the relocation of Kivalina could attract the State’s interests and it became possible for planners to identify problems. The Consensus Building Project is an example of a project that was designed to identify these issues, although most of the needs and problems of relocation in Kivalina had been previously identified. The Consensus Building Project, while it had the merit to gather an important number of Kivalina residents, was another relocation administrative procedure adding to the numerous previous ones. If the Consensus Building Project has been designed following state administrative criterion and exigencies, one must avoid any miserabilist perspective (Olivier de Sardan 2005; Fresia 2007:110). The Alaska State planner who managed the Newtok Project, and who was in Kivalina for the Consensus Project, explains:

“If the community didn’t want government helping them out with any issues they wouldn’t do it. There’s got to be that participatory connection there between the community and the agencies that are working with them” (Anchorage 2010).

Following that approach, the project has been organized with the authorization and collaboration of the Kivalina City authorities.

As the chapter 2 describes it, this Consensus Project underlined a need for consensus between the stakeholders of the relocation planning process. To increase the communication between all parties, the idea of participation was raised. The consultant and the State planner both explained it was a project “by the people” for their future, adding that local residents were the only ones who knew what they wanted for their future. These tendencies to ask for participation of local residents in state designed projects exist in other villages which need to be relocated. It is, for instance, often expressed in the Alaskan institutional arena on Climate Change. Marino noted about fieldwork she undertook in meetings of the Immediate Action Work Group “the members of the IAWG board themselves have, at every meeting and in every report, discussed the need for local voice in state and federal projects. Stakeholders in every sense, these government agency men and women are working diligently to find mechanisms by which to aid these communities. But in a cross cultural setting, how to establish local voice is complex and is easy to ignore because of the magnitude and immensity of flooding and erosion” (Marino 2009:47) problems. Participation becomes a tool for state and federal institutional actors to respond to the problem of the relocation’s blockage and to justify the IAWG directives under the Alaska State Climate Change Strategy (2008).

The idea of participation expressed by government workers reveals a populist approach of the Kivalina residents’ knowledge in general, and more specifically of the relocation activists. Jean Pierre Olivier de Sardan defines populism as “a certain relationship between intellectuals (associated with privileged classes and groups) and the people (dominated classes and groups): a relationship in which intellectuals discover the people, pity their lot in life and/or marvel at their capacities, and decide to put themselves at the disposal of the people and to strive for their welfare” (2005:35). In the case of the consensus building project’s first meeting, the last part of this definition is especially relevant for Kivalina. The discourses expressing a need for participation can be analyzed as administrative strategies used by institutional actors to managed local development interventions. The use of an approach focusing on local participation to reach consensus as a need tend to overshadow the heterogeneity of local social realities. Using the “consensus” and “participation” rethoric diminishes, in the case of Kivalima relocation, the weight of previous political processes, such as the 2000 vote for moving to Kinktuuraq. By doing so, this rethoric evacuates the political and social realities with

their power relationships that the relocation process generates. The participation rhetoric must be institutionally and politically contextualized (Lavigne Delville 2000: 10) to understand the institutional logics that exist behind the “need for participation”. Following this approach, the analysis of individual strategies or actions, such as the proposition to form teams for the Consensus building Project workshop (see chapter 2), shows that the concept of “participation” is also appropriated by local residents, influencing the relocation planning process and the overcoming of the blockage.

On the same level, the state planner and the consultant present in Kivalina insisted that participation was needed during the Consensus Building Project. By doing so, they gave a certain legitimacy to their project designed in the administrative arenas in Anchorage and Juneau, following the IAWG directives. This rhetoric of a “need for consensus” lays at the origin of the project, “as a project always claims to have a specific coherence which justifies its existence, and which is often opposed to former or neighbouring projects the development [and state interventions] configuration being [worlds] of fierce competition” (Olivier de Sardan 2005:140). In that sense, the consultant, and the administrative workers had also to show that the money⁵⁸ they received from the Legislature to realize the Consensus Building Project would be used. They had to deal with the structural constraints of their institutional context: “you don’t want to stereotype government agency people either because we’re all human beings, basically, I mean, obviously we have a job and we have to follow some rules that are set out” (State planner, Anchorage 2010).

Individual actors have also to think about their individual career and make sure that the project comes to an end. Furthermore, the influence of doorprizes (see chapter 2) during the main Consensus project workshop, which can partially explain the large attendance, should be taken into consideration when analyzing the question of participation (e.g. Ridde 2010), as it questions the idea of consensus. This presence of doorprizes at the entrance of the gym underlines specific realities. On the one hand, only a portion of the local population (Lavigne Delville 2000:18) will attend the meeting, questioning the very essence of consensus. On the other hand, the presence of doorprizes reveals administrative needs and procedures locally anchored which legitimize, on a structural level, the existence of the State of Alaska’s *Climate Change Strategy* (2008).

⁵⁸ These financial resources represent a portion of the 150000 dollars grant that was assigned to the villages designated as imperiled by the Alaska Climate Change Impact Mitigation Program Community Planning Grant.

At the end, a state intervention such as the Consensus Project which aims to overcome the blockage of the relocation process “thus appears to be a game in which the players involved all use different cards and play according to different rules. It could also be seen as a system of resources and opportunities which everyone tries to appropriate in his or her own way” (Olivier de Sardan 2005:185). In addition, the Consensus Building Project, through the specific uses of concepts like “consensus” and “participation”, can be seen as a form of institutional response to the Kivalina relocation halt. This project gives credibility to the State’s approach of climate change social issues in Northwest Alaska, while it is appropriated by local relocation activists.

CONCLUSION

Climate Change and Relocation

The boat was heading toward the mouth of the Kivalina River. As we were leaving the lagoon for the river, the woman next to me (the city administrator who deals with relocation on a daily basis) explained to me that this area was a good one to see musk oxen; they were often grazing near the riverbanks. I looked closely, but could not see any. I asked her where to look and where they could be. The woman paused and finally answered, “I don’t know, they must have relocated,” amused by her evocation.

Before being a project that can be analyzed and/or implemented, relocation is first and foremost a situation that individuals have to deal with on a daily basis. The relocation of a village does not only concern moving infrastructure and people. It is also—and perhaps mainly—about changing lives, and about how to live daily while imagining a radically different relatively near future. The topic of relocation is an issue which is embedded in the everyday life and occupations of Kivalina residents. Analyzing relocation as an anthropological object means here to understand how groups of individuals negotiate the orientation of their future. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding how residents and relocation activists use individual and institutional strategies or actions to address relocation, while dealing with federal, state, regional, and local political and administrative realities and constraints. By doing so, we become able to identify some of the causes that explain the blockage of the relocation process in Kivalina.

The first chapter of this thesis has shown that behind the commonly accepted environmental cause lay historical and colonial realities that set the background dynamics for the contemporary relocation context. Relocation is first and foremost needed because during the area’s early colonial history, federal employees and Christian missionaries pushed for the creation of a village on a location only used by the Kivalliñigmiut during seasonal migration. The growth of the population on the island has led to a lack of space and the will to relocate. Following this perspective, I have suggested that the whole contemporary relocation project of Kivalina, more than an isolated event in the history of the village, can be seen as a long term chain of events that stretches over the second half of the 20th century. The relocation efforts have been marked by periods of advances and other ones of blockages, until the current blockage following the launch of the Kivalina *Master Plan* (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2006). Each generation of relocation activists had to address the problem of relocation and the halts that marked the process. The current generation did it, for example, by filing a

climate change lawsuit and by deliberately exposing the issue in international, national, state, and regional media. Lobbying institutional actors for funding and engineering expertise as well as creating local planning committees have been others ways to address the relocations efforts. The analysis of these tools shows an ability of local relocation activists to act in their own best interests, within a context of complex structural and institutional constraints. Examples of these constraints are the increasing presence of the State of Alaska administration in the relocation planning procedures, or the repetition of administrative procedures and projects. Local Kivalina residents are not passive recipients of intervention as the Consensus Project case study shows it. They are rather participant actors of change who actively process information and strategically engage with “various local actors as well as with outside institutions and personnel” (Long 2001:13).

During my fieldwork, I was inserted in a specific social network composed of relocation advocates. Relocation activists are a group of people composed of local religious and political leaders, local administration workers, and elders from different extended families. These are the people who have the political and social power to push for or stop the relocation process on a local and institutional level. My insertion into this specific social network has shaped the arguments in this thesis. Relocation is therefore presented here as a need. This perspective does not mean that conflicts of interest are nonexistent between Kivalina residents. However, I have argued that the causes of the blockage are to be found in the individual and institutional relationships between the relocation activists, including Kivalina leaders and residents, and the regional, state, and federal representatives involved in the relocation process.

This is where the analysis of the situations of interface plays a key role in the understanding of the relocation planning process. By questioning a democratic decision made by Kivalina residents, the state and federal administrative procedures have paradoxically turned the relocation process to a halt. In other words, the planning processes of the relocation project and the relationships between institutional actors and local relocation activists have blocked a project designed to improve living standards of Kivalina inhabitants. Early discussions on relocation (Replogle 1911) have been followed by numerous debates, popular vote, and administrative procedures since the mid-1950s. Following the understanding of relocation as a chain of events, the current situation of the process can be characterized as a blockage, creating side effects such as

the feeling of battle fatigue, disinterest in government intervention about relocation, or a lack of hope for a better future. The idea of motionless relocation underlines this paradoxical situation. On a discursive level, Kivalina is in the process of being relocated. However, when one focuses on the practices' level, the analysis reveals that actions are not oriented toward a close actual move. This situation of a motionless relocation crystallizes divergent representations and expectations of how the relocation should be undertaken.

During the Consensus Building Project analyzed in chapter 2, several needs were identified by the relocation team composed of local residents and relocation activists. These were: the need to give to the tribal government the lead of the relocation process; the need to work with state and federal agencies; the need to resolve current site issues; the need to keep building the hope; the need to keep the agreement; and the importance of considering global warming. All these needs result from the blockage of the relocation process. They illustrate the lack of move characterizing the situation of a motionless relocation.

The analysis of these needs in chapter 3 has underlined the social, political and institutional dynamics which characterize them. The first two were the communication conflicts and the relationships between stakeholders. Their analysis shows that conflicts of representations—on topics like land uses and site selection, between local institutional and individual actors and agencies personnel involved in the process—are at the roots of the blockage. The confrontation between technocratic-engineering knowledge, which tends to culturalize the relocation activists' involvement, and local technical knowledge has led to the blockage. The third element, the “current site issues,” has been addressed with, for example, the construction of the new Kivalina health clinic and the seawall on the ocean side. The study of the latter has shown that a situation of interface plays a key role in understanding the dynamics and nature of the relations between the relocation stakeholders. The fourth and fifth elements identified by the relocation team are the dual needs of hope and agreement. Their examination has shown realities of administrative procedures repetitions and the increasing complexity of the institutional and administrative arena on climate change and relocation. These are characteristics that can also explain the blockage. The analytical discussion of the “participation” and “consensus” concepts has shown that administrative and institutional procedures tend to depoliticize the relocation debates and orient them on a

strict engineering level. Local actors are, however, willing to appropriate government interventions, in order to lead the relocation planning process and the overcoming of the blockage.

Finally, local/emic perspectives on relocation shows that “land erosion and global warming were minor issues during the first years of the developing village relocation project” (Swan 2007: 3). This observation demands a historic, social, and political contextualization to understand each specific relocation process. In other words, I insist on the importance of relating the history of colonization in the Northwest to the present contemporary climate change challenges such as relocation. Consequently, the ethnography of a motionless relocation in Kivalina puts into perspective the official reports, natural sciences, and engineering research in the area which all state that the unavoidable need to relocate the village in future decades is caused by a changing environment and climate change. These are commonly accepted causes for relocation efforts of coastal villages in Northwest Alaska. Environmental hazards and climate change are only adding to existing local realities “including economic resources, technology, information and skills, infrastructure, and institutions” (Ford et al. 2009:5). A great deal is done with understanding how environmental changes are affecting local populations, but often the reasons why those settlements are located on risky grounds is not sufficiently developed. Climate change is complex, and it acts as a threat multiplier impacting existing contexts. “It magnifies and exacerbates existing social, economic, political, and environmental trends, problems, issues, tensions, and challenges” (Crate, Nuttall 2009:11).

With this work, I have shown the following: how an Iñupiaq village and its population are affected by climate change; how historical, political, social, and institutional factors create the contemporary context for relocation debates; and how local actors are not passive in facing their future. Accordingly, and to open the discussion, I argue that the future of policy making on climate change issues—which strongly influence relocation processes such as in Kivalina—is highly dependent on the capacity of institutional and scientific stakeholders to collaborate with local actors. With climate change, modern science is challenged in its very heart. The ways of life it helped to build are now called into question, and science is expected to give understandable and potential solutions for facing environmental changes. What is at stake here is how to deal with those changes. In others words, “we are confronted with the challenge of comprehending and

responding to [change]” (Crate, Nuttall 2009:9). As Iñupiaq societies are among the first to be affected by climate change, we need to consider the northern experiences. We need to learn how climate change issues are dealt with, and how policy makers adapt their strategies, if they do so, by listening and including local concerns. Anthropology has a role to play in this endeavor.



Figure 9. Kivalina, July 2009



Figure 10: Kivalina, January 2010.

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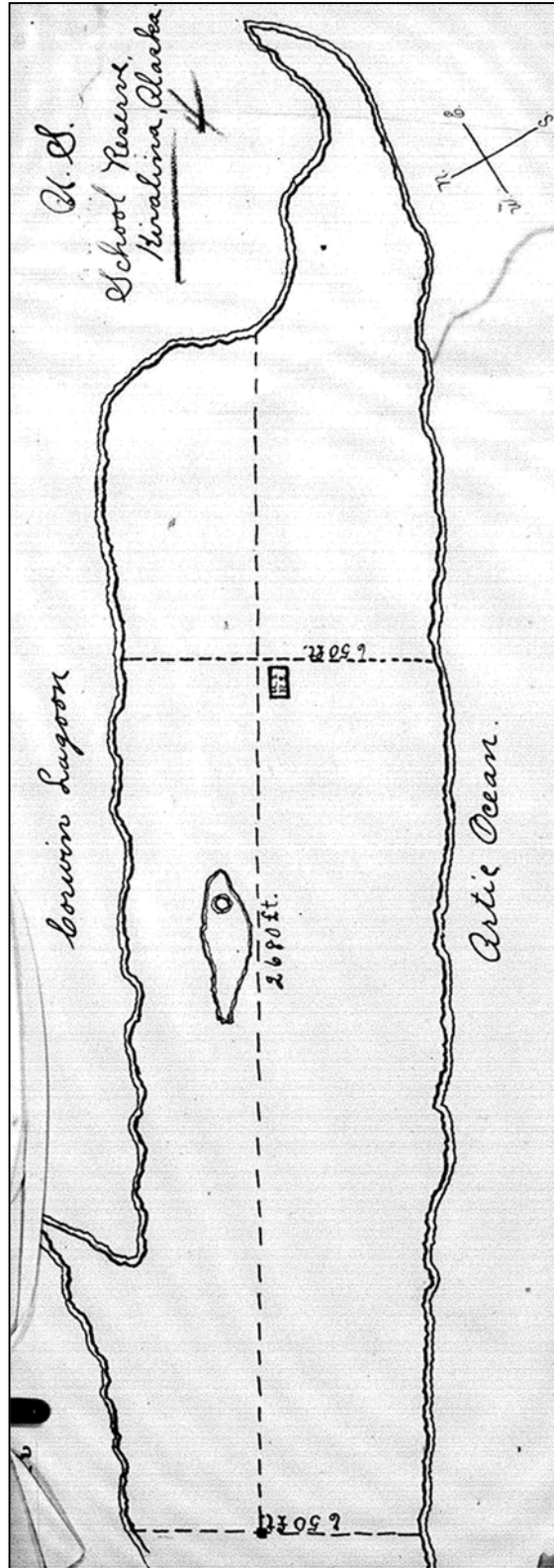
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APPENDIX A

Maps

1. Kivalina Island and Area

Source: Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1908-1915, *General Correspondence*, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of education Alaska, Division, Elmer S. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, microfilms collection (AMF 3861).



2. Kivalina Hunting Area and Camps

Map established with the information provided by Replogle "Reppi" Swan, Kivalina, February 2010

Green spots: camps

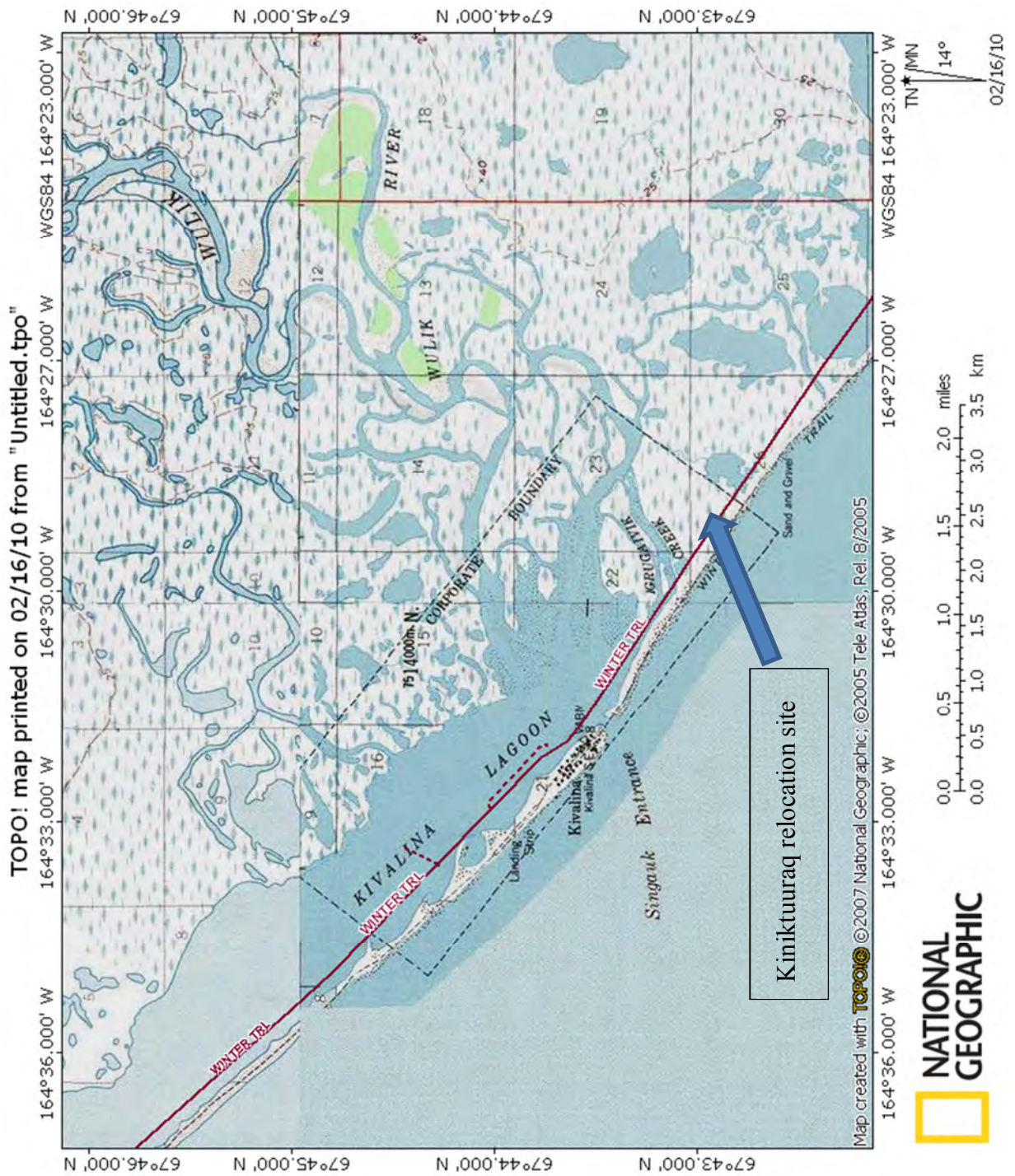
Red Spots: infrastructures and village



Kivalina

Red Dog mine port

3. Kivalina City Boundaries and lagoon area



Source: TOPO! Map, National Geographic, 2007. Map created on 16/02/2010.

APPENDIX B

Illustrations

Kivalina Aerial Views in Time



1939: early settlement on Kivalina Island. Sod Houses are visible on both sides of the main "street".
Source: www.alaskool.org, accessed 02/10/2010.



1964: the village is growing. Courtesy of Janet Mitchell, Kivalina.



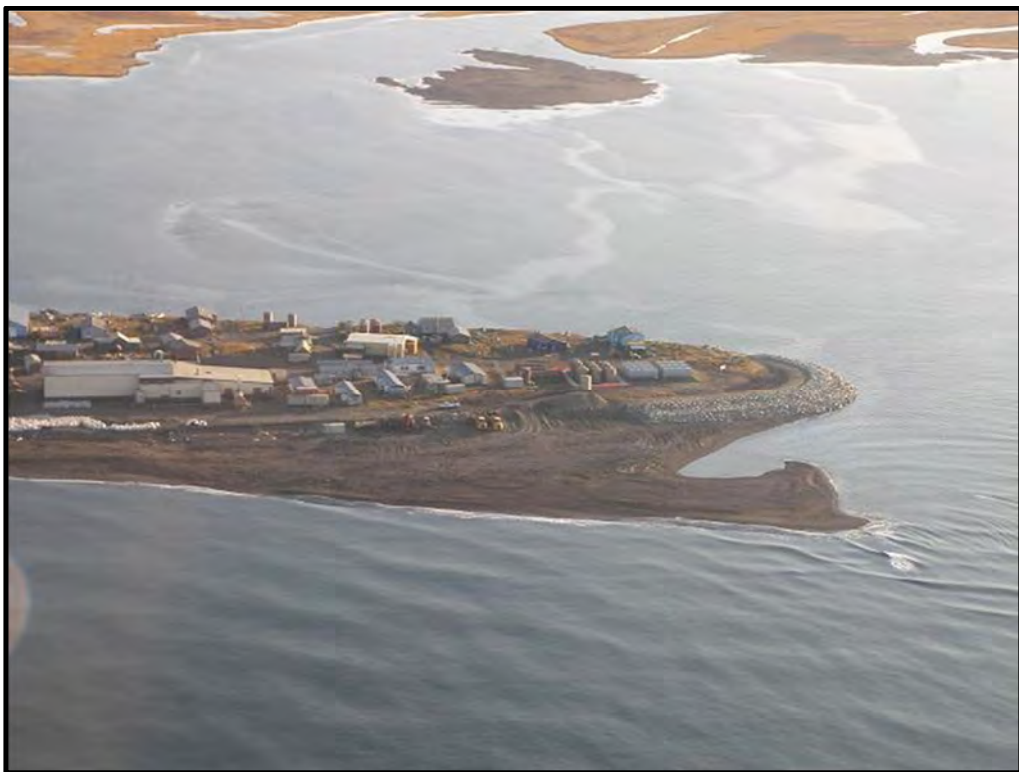
1976: The current McQueen School building which replaced the U.S Indian School is visible in the middle of the picture. Source: Lidia Selkregg et al., *Kivalina*, University of Alaska, Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center, prepared for the Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs, December 1976.



2008: Erosion has been severe on the ocean side. Courtesy Millie Hawley, Kivalina.



2009: The first portion of the erosion protection is finished. The construction has been halted due to lack of funding. Courtesy Millie Hawley, Kivalina



2009: Changing forms of the cost. Courtesy Janet Mitchell, Kivalina.

APPENDIX C

Privately Owned Archives Material

1. Teachers at Kivalina, Alaska 1905-1974

Courtesy of Lucille Wesley, Kivalina, February 2010.

Teachers at Kivalina, Alaska

1905-06: Alfred and Priscilla Walton
1906-07: Alfred and Priscilla Walton
1907-08: Alfred and Priscilla Walton
1908-09: Herbert R. York
1909-10: Herbert R. York
1910-11: Herbert R. York
1911-12: Raymond A Bates; sister Margaret Bates
1912-13: Mr. Maguire and wife
1913-14: Mr. Maguire and wife
1914-15: Clinton Replogle
1915-16: Clinton Replogle
1916-17: H.D. Reese
1917-18: H.D. Reese
1918-19: Joe Sokonik and Edith Weber
1919-20: Joe Sokonik and Edith Weber
1920-21: Joe Sokonik and Edith Weber
1921-22: Joe Sokonik
1922-23: C.L. Andrews and Joe Sokonik
1923-24: Mr. E. Nylin
1924-25: Mr. and Mrs. George Morelander
1925-26: Mr. and Mrs. George Morelander
1926-27: Raymond Replogle

Teachers at Kivalina

1927-28: Raymond Replogle
1928-29: Tony Joule
1929-30: Tony Joule
1930-31: Tony Joule
1931-32: Tony Joule
1932-33: Darrold A. Wagner
1933-34: Darrold A. Wagner
1934-35: Darrold A. Wagner
1935-36: Darrold A. Wagner
1936-37: Ola Nashoalook (6 months)
1937-38: John G. Nichols and Susan Nichols
1938-39: Emma Wagner
1939-40: Leo F. Sams
1940-41: Aileen Dammasch, Louis F. Dammasch (Spec. Asst.)
1941-42: O.C. Pinney Connely
1942-43: O.C. Pinney Connely
1943-44: Eunice Stalker
1944-45: Eunice Stalker
1945-46: Eunice Stalker
1946-47: Eunice B. Stalker, Daniel Stalker (Spec. Asst.)
1947-48: Eunice B. Stalker, Daniel Stalker (Spec. Asst.)
1948-49: No teacher
1949-50: Jennie Newlin Sours (6 months)
1950-51: Wm. and Mrs. Petit
1951-52: William Dalton Petit, Mildred D.C. Petit
1952-53: Isabelle B. Bingham (or Petits, not sure)

Teachers at Kivalina

1953-54: Isabel B. Bingham
1954-55: Isabel B. Bingham
1955-56: Isabel B. Bingham
1956-57: Isabel B. Bingham
1957-58: Isabel B. Bingham
1958-59: Isabel B. Bingham
1959-60: Alfred and Anita Ryll
1960-61: Alfred and Anita Ryll
1961-62: Mary Gillespie
1962-63: Mary Gillespie
1963-64: Mary Gillespie
1964-65: James and Dorothy Keating
1965-66: James and Dorothy Keating
1966-67: James and Dorothy Keating
1967-68: Darrel Hargraves
1968-69: Charlie and Kathy Schmelzenbauch
1969-70: Charlie and Kathy Schmelzenbauch
1970-71: Tom and Jack Troxell
1971-72: Tom and Jack Troxell
1972-73: Mel and Dee Bowns, Mr. and Mrs. Johnston
1973-74: Mel and Dee Bowns, Mr. and Mrs. Brian Paust

2. “Statement of Informed Consent” and “Ethnographic Research: Personnel Agreement and Release Form”

My personal notes and observations, as well as the interviews and recorded discussions I produced were not shared. My initial will, influenced by the IRB procedures and the Oral history class I took at UAF, was to give all of my recordings to the public archives at UAF and to the IRA administration. This option is chosen by some researcher involved in oral history research programs (e.g. Climate Change Project Jukebox home page <http://jukebox.uaf.edu/ClimateChange/home.html>, accessed 1/7/2011).

I finally decided not to use the consent forms, as the recorded interview would stay in my possession. I gave copies of every interview I made to the individual who orally accepted to collaborate with me. Another episode in my research influenced my choice. I found recorded interviews in the Archives at UAF. They had been recorded between the 1970s and 1990s in Kivalina, but none of them had signed informed consent forms accompanying them. I wanted to listen to them. Therefore, as I was in Kivalina, I asked the next of kin of the individuals who had been interviewed to sign the forms, according to the requirements of my oral history professor Dr. William Schneider, the curator of the Oral history program at UAF, who supervised the procedure. I managed to gather three signatures, making these recording public.

One of the main issues I had to deal with was to find the next of kin. The choice was at the end completely arbitral, about which next of kin was the right one who should sign. Some had moved and were living in other towns in Alaska. Some other had passed away. I also found out that this form had no real relevancy for local inhabitants. They saw it more as another form or administrative procedure they did not need, and probably signed them more to help the young student I was. I also felt that these people who were asked to sign felt embarrassed; without signing the forms, they would not have been allowed to have access to the recordings, according to the legal status of such material at UAF. Signing to be able to listen to stories that had been recorded with a member of their families was an awkward situation. Indeed, they felt and told me that the recording already belonged to them. The institutional administrative procedures should here be questioned, as it limits and orient the ethnographic and anthropological methods (e.g. Cefaï 2009).

Statement of Informed Consent

Ethnographic Research Project in Kivalina 2009-2010

I am Patrick Durrer from the University of Neuchâtel (UNINE) in Switzerland and University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). I am working on a project focusing on how people of Kivalina are dealing with the relocation process that they are facing nowadays. I would like to interview you as part of this project.

I plan to use the information collected during this project as part of my general research and writing about relocation in Alaska. In particular, I hope to write a Master thesis that describes: the different phases of the relocation planning process; how the decision about the new site are and have been taken; what are the main concerns for the people of Kivalina at the present time. I wish to do it in a format that is useful to the local community as well as to researchers (anthropologists, historians) trying to understand relocation, a process that is going on for several decades.

The recoded interviews and the transcripts can be provided to the interviewee and the interviewer will keep them in his personal archives. Copies of the recordings will also be provided to the IRA Council for their archives, if desired. Would you decide that some interviews or part of them cannot be stored, please feel free to let me know.

For more information, please contact:

Patrick Durrer
Graduate Student
Department of Anthropology
University of Alaska Fairbanks
patrick.durrer@unine.ch
(907) 474-7051

Dr. Patrick Plattet (Advisor)
Assistant Professor
Department of Anthropology
University of Alaska Fairbanks
ffpp1@uaf.edu
(907) 474-6608
(907) 474-7453 fax

Thank you – Quayanaq for participating and sharing your knowledge with this project.

Ethnographic Research: Personnel Agreement and Release Form

Thank you / Quyanaq for sharing this information with me. I really appreciate your contribution that will help me to write about the social and environmental changes that are taking place in Kivalina.

By signing this form, **both recognize that this in no way or restricts you from sharing the same information with others.** The agreement allows me, the interviewer, to use the information you provided strictly for writing my Master thesis, entitled *Living in Kivalina: Negotiating Forced Settlement, Relocation, and Socio-environmental Changes in Northwest Alaska*.

The recordings will be transcribed and analyzed for the purpose of the research. A copy of the interview and transcript will be sent to you and a copy of the completed thesis will be sent to _____ and deposited for public reference at University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Library. Any **further use** of this material by the interviewer **will have to be renegotiated** with the interviewee, and a new release form would be signed.

(Narrator's printed name)

(Date)

(Narrator's Signature)

(Narrator's printed mailing and email address)

(Interviewer's printed name)

(Date)

(Interviewer's Signature)

(Interviewer's printed name and email address)

APPENDIX D

Public Archive Material

1. Letter to the Kivalina City Council asking permission for fieldwork

My supervisor at UAF, Patrick Plattet, advised me to consult Bill Schneider, the anthropologist in charge of the Oral History Program at UAF and who is used to work in Alaska. Bill suggested I should write a formal letter to the Tribal or City council and prepare myself to present my research project to the same Council. He suggested that I should emphasize the will to learn about the people I would perhaps live with. He also suggested that I should mention that I would be open to negotiate in what ways this research would serve the community leaders' interests. I followed his advices.

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Fairbanks, AK 99775
USA
patrick.durrer@unine.ch

Kivalina City Council
50079 Bering Street
P.O. Box 50079
Kivalina, AK 99750
USA

Fairbanks, July 20 2009

Dear Council Members,

My name is Patrick Durrer and I am a Master's degree student from Switzerland (Europe), currently affiliated with the University of Alaska in Fairbanks (UAF). I have been studying relocation of Arctic villages facing environmental changes and I came to Alaska hoping to work on these issues and to document more specifically the extent to which they impact a whaling community like yours.

I am therefore writing to ask if it would be possible for me to make a first visit to Kivalina in August in order to begin conversations about how relocation affects your village and its inhabitants. At the same time, I want to be sure that my research will have some relevance for you and possibly even be of use to you. I have been researching all the possible information that I could gather. However, in order to get some accurate information, I will need to visit and talk to people directly. My main objective is to learn your concerns about the challenges that you are facing and see how we could think of mutually beneficial goals. Ideally, my plan could be the following:

- First research phase: a initial stay in Kivalina in August in order to prepare, together with your community, a longer research plan
- Second research phase: a second series of short visits to your village in the course of the Fall semester at UAF
- Third research phase: three months of fieldwork in and around Kivalina from January to March 2010.

As an MA student in anthropology and social sciences, I intend to learn in what ways my skills as a researcher would be useful for the community. The idea would also be to talk to and to carry out interviews with the villagers about how exactly they feel relocation affects and will affect them. With your permission, I could record those discussions. Taking notes, pictures and maybe filming would also be part of my job.

If you agree, all this ethnographic material could eventually be given to the Oral History Program which is now running at UAF since 1988 (Bill Schneider). This Program collects and preserves recorded information about Alaska's oral history. I see my work as offering a

1

chance to leave a written and oral recorded trace of what is happening now in Kivalina for the future generations. Moreover, I think that my work will also contribute to draw attention to the importance of environmental change in the Arctic and to the challenges of relocation for the people of Kivalina.

As an MA student in anthropology, I will also have to write a detailed ethnographic description (for my MA Thesis) of the relocation planning process in relation with climate change. In the end, I will be providing a written account of the situation which the community of Kivalina is experiencing now, before relocation.

I am aware that my research project would imply a commitment of time and energy on the part of many people in Kivalina. Reciprocally, I will do my best to make sure that your community will benefit from my research. I am therefore ready to hear all your suggestions regarding the various aspects of my research. If you accept this proposal, I would be able to come to Kivalina as soon as the beginning of August. Please let me know if there is any additional information or clarification you may need.

Yours faithfully,

Patrick Durrer

PS: You can contact me either by email, post mail or phone: (907) 474-7051
Here is also my Advisor's contact information

Dr. Patrick Plattet (Advisor)
Department of Anthropology
University of Alaska Fairbanks
ffpp1@uaf.edu
(907) 474-6608
(907) 474-7453 fax

2. Letter written by the Relocation Team for the Consensus Building Project

Source: GRAY Glenn, 2010 *Kivalina Consensus Building Project Final Project Report*, Kivalina Consensus Building Project, July 2010, prepared by Glen Gray and Associates Juneau for The Alaska Climate Change Impact Mitigation Program, Division of Community and Regional Affairs Planning and Land Management, State of Alaska.

http://commerce.alaska.gov/dca/planning/accimp/pub/Kivalina_Consensus_Building_Project_Final_Report_July_2010.pdf, accessed 12/17/2010.

Kivalina Consensus Building Project Enclosure to the May 20, 2010 Workshop

Letter from the Relocation Team Read During the May 20 Community Workshop

19May2010

To All Concerned,

The Kivalina Relocation planning efforts have been attempting to address overcrowding and sanitation issues to date. However, new problems of accelerated erosion stemming from global warming has produced reason to be concerned for the safety and wellbeing of the residents if we continue to live at or near the sea. The new sea wall provides for some measure of security but does not guarantee our island's survival indefinitely. For the sake of safety and peace of mind, and to address the overcrowding and lack of sanitation problems, it would be highly desirable for this village to move to higher ground, a spot with stable soils, with access to clean water, and sufficient ground for a landfill.

To be truthful, getting the money to move anywhere, Kiniktuuraq included, will be very hard to accomplish. Kivalina is not exactly on any agencies favorable list due to the global warming lawsuit and the flap over Red Dog.

The agency that can help us move to another site is the Corp of Engineers. It is now four years with no sign of progress in the planning with the Corp. Working with the Corp is imperative at this time.

Finally, our working relationship on the relocation planning has mutated into cloak and dagger politics. We do not work together anymore. Kivalina has fractured into individualism and policies crafted behind closed doors. As long as we continue on this present course, with no unified voice as a community, we will all fall into the ditch. Therefore, the proceedings from this meeting should not be the final chapter of our village relocation efforts. Give the Kivalina IRA Council time and space to restore order within their organization and allow them to lead our village. The City of Kivalina needs to continue working with the State to maintain dialog on consensus.

The people will be watching, with or without results. We are all crafting a legacy together. What we do now, will be in the books for our great, great grandchildren to research about for their college papers.

Relocation Team members

APPENDIX E

Description

Description of life in sod houses (1950s-1970s)

Enoch Adams Jr., Kivalina, February 26, 2010.

“It’s a top layer of the tundra cut up in blocks, lined up against a wooden frame, made of drift wood. Of course we had nails by then so they used nails to put the frame... hold the frame together. We used to use pigs a long time ago. But it would be single room, the floor was wooden, wooden plats. I can remember those plats were 4 inches wide and they were tow and grooved type that were put together and laid on the ground, that was our floor. We had a stove made out of a drum, made out of a drum; a fifty-five gallon drum was cut on the first seam, probably about a 20 – 18, 18 gallon size. It was circular, it had 2 chambers, one for the fire and one to be used as a baffle, with a stove pipe, the stove pipe was 4 inches, non- insulated, and... our walls were cardboard, in the summer and in the winter, especially in the winter time we could hear the mice behind the..., behind the cardboards crawling around at night, and, our light was a Coleman gas lantern, probably as bright as a 75W bulb and of course the was one room.

Cooking was done on the woodstove. We had one window, a huge window, on the side that was for natural light summer time, spring time. The shed was 55 gallon drums rolled out, straightened out, and put on a wooden frame, and it was probably about 25 feet long. It’s where we stored our winter supply for seal oil and dried meat, dried fish and various things, dog harnesses. My dad ran a dog team of about 8 dogs. Our toilet facilities was a simple 3 gallon bucket, our tissue paper was a Sears’s raw book catalogues. Sears raw book and Montgomery ward, we never threw those catalogues that we got every fall and every spring we never threw them away, we used them as toilet paper.

Oh my goodness... In the summer time we never lived in these dwellings, too hot, too hot in the summer time. Too damp. You became very damp. When summer time came after spring season was over, when it would get warm and all the ice is gone and all the snow is gone we’d leave the doors open so that, the igloo would dry out, and leave it open as long as we can, for it to dry out. And as drying out we’d pitch tents on the ocean side, we’d pitch tents for the spring and summer.

We had a woodstove, Coleman stove, Coleman lantern, and that’s what we lived in. And now we have computers. We moved to a regular wooden home, 4 walls, 1 bedroom, oil stove, propane stove, electricity, well, before the electricity. We moved into our home in 1970... no, no, no, 1969, 1969 my dad was finally able to get enough money to get... to build a regular house, with a regular floor, with 4 windows, a regular kind of door, a regular storm shed and ... we finally got electricity here in Kivalina in 1971, when I was 11 years old.

So for the first 9 years of my life, I grew up in a sod igloo, with no electricity. No running water. Now we still don’t have flush toilets, we have honey buckets now that have seats. Back then they didn’t come with seats. We have toilet paper now available, and we were able to afford having toilet paper. We would keep the... we don’t keep the Sears raw book catalogues anymore, the Montgomery ward[...] so we don’t have that

kind of stuff anymore, we don't live in those conditions anymore. We have electricity, we have computers, we've got satellite dishes, we still have no running water but, the school does, so... and the washeteria does, when it's running. So we've become familiar with the western lifestyle, with all the amenities that come with it, at least most of them.

People use... we used to have Maytag washers that were used outside, even in the winter time they would be used outside because they were powered by gas engines. As water would be heated inside the house, water would be brought out to the washer, the Maytag washer that was powered by 2 or 3 horsepower gasoline engine. And washing of clothes was done outside. So good weather was taken advantage of by, by doing laundry outside, and it's incredible we... a lot of people have driers now in their homes. I don't but I use my sister's. But we didn't have driers, the clothes that were washed they would be hung on clothes lines outside, even in the dead of winter. And, basically what took place was that they were freeze dried, hand dried. Clothes were hand dried in the, even in the wintertime. I used to wonder how that happened. I found out later in school that humidity was measured up here in the winter time. When instruments were able to be sent up here and used and test, test weather. And one of the instruments was to check humidity. Long before they found out that the winter air up here was drier than the desert. So, that led to the mystery as to how, even in the dead of winter, clothes would dry up. Of course there would be frost on the clothes but, bring them inside and hang them and they would dry pretty quick. All that would need to happen was the frost to dry up. And they would be dry.

So a lot of our ways of doing things were very practical. Our people, they figured out how these things took place in the winter time. One of the things that our... one of the characteristics about our people is practicality. It was the way of life. We always found practical ways to do things and you could see the ingenuity of our people, simply by looking at how we lived life up here. Our lives were simple, but effective. We knew what... where our limitations were and we knew what...how available our resources were. And we adapted to them.

So that's just one example of how we... what kind of changes we saw during the course of a single generation, merely, during my generation. Of course, my parents and people of that age, they have more detailed story of how... They can remember not getting catalogues or metal was a... you were rich if you had iron, slabs around, if you had wood saw you were a rich man”.