Rights, Resilience and Community-led Relocation

National Adaptation Forum
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• *Climate Change Research & Policy Institute*: a boundary organization that strives to increase the adaptive capacity of Alaska Native communities experiencing climate change.
ARCTIC ICE

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Chukchi Sea: Ice extent

Chukchi Sea Daily Ice Extent
1979-2018

Sea Ice Extent (km²)

Data source: NSIDC Sea Ice Index, Version 3
Updated through November 27, 2018
Combination of repeated and frequent extreme weather events and slow-ongoing environmental change: decreased arctic sea ice, thawing permafrost and accelerated rates of erosion
All imminently threatened by flooding and erosion. Two made the decision to relocate.
WHAT IS PLANNED COMMUNITY RELOCATION?

• Voluntary: Right to Self-Determination

• Disaster Risk Reduction– prior to displacement of populations caused by extreme weather event

• Planned – long-term process

• Community

• Rebuild homes, infrastructure and livelihoods

• Maintain social and kinship connections
Climate-induced community relocations are perhaps the greatest human rights challenge of our time. Those who have least contributed to our climate crisis are now the first to face the permanent loss of their homelands, and thus, need to relocate. Population relocation affects the human right to life and self-determination, as well as a wide range of social, economic, and cultural rights. Alaska Native communities are among the first communities to decide that relocation of their entire community is the only long-term adaptation strategy to protect the lives of community residents from climate change impacts.
FOUR GOVERNANCE ISSUES

• NO government agency has the mandate or funding to relocate a community

• WHO makes the decision?

• WHEN: No institutional framework to determine the point in time when relocation needs to occur

• HOW can relocation occur prior to the occurrence of an extreme weather event that displaces people?

• HOW can human rights be protected?
ADAPTIVE RELOCATION GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK
HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

Protection in Place

Relocation Indicators

Community Relocation
Relocation Governance Design

Four Components
1. Federal Legislation
2. Good Governance
3. Social-Environmental Monitoring
4. Funding
HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

• TRIBAL CONTROL

• TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

• INCLUSION OF FISH CAMPS AND SACRED SITES
Integration of Indigenous Knowledge with Atmospheric and Physical Science

- Storm Forecasting
- Documentation of flooding and erosion events
- Install erosion and shoreline change monitoring time lapse cameras in 8 communities

Kwigillingok: Erosion along barge landing site on Kuskokwim Bay in 2011. Yellow plastic poles are placed along the bank to measure rates of erosion.

1985 Bank erosion protection
Kotlik: Victor Tonunchuk
Alaska DGGS: Community-based erosion monitoring

Providing local individuals with scientific protocols and training for collecting data

Tide staff at installation and during flood event, surveyed to vertical reference frame.

Denise Pollock (AIJ), Lewis Amik III (Kwigillingok), and Emmett Matthias (Kotlik) working to install and monitoring flooding and erosion.
AIJ Compiles Storm Narratives

November 2017 Storm and Weather Narratives

Alaska Institute for Justice

November 2017 Storm and Weather Narratives

This storm narrative report provides these 5 NWS forecasts and storm observations for communities in Galovin, Kotlik, Unalakleet, Kivalina, Shishmaref, Nelson Lagoon, and Port Heiden. Also included are weather updates, ground failure events, and wind storm events for communities of Amtshluk, Eyiak, Elim, Chevak, Kugillinguk. As a result of the coastal flood advisories, high surf advisories, strong wind alerts, and minimal to no sea ice formation many of these communities experienced erosion and flooding impacts.

November 20, 2017

Forecast: The National Weather Service issued a coastal flooding alert November 22 through November 23 in Galovin.

Observed Storm Details: In the evening of November 19, Galovin experienced waves a little higher than high tide. Wind gusts stayed under 30mph. On November 20, southeast winds occurred during the day and died down at 5pm, when the wind switched to south winds until 2am. The tide was way out and the beach tripled in width. There was a bunch of slush and young ice in Galovin Bay and in the lagoon, and heavy snow for most of the crossing. Observing November 21, south winds at 30mph shifted to southwest winds. Flooding does not usually occur with southeast winds. The wind died down after 11:30pm and stars became visible in the sky part of the sky, and as it calmed later, most stars were visible in the sky.

At 5pm on November 22, west winds brought the tide into Galovin fast until the wind got stronger and switched more from the northwest direction. By 7pm the wind was coming from the west. By 11:30pm, the snow squalls stopped and wind subsided until there was no wind. There was little wave action on the beaches because of the slush ice and thin ice formed on the Galovin Bay side.

Observed Storm Impact: On November 22, the storm went up and covered 3/4 or more of the old airport. The water reached almost the same height as the October 11-12 event (Toby Anangnuk Jr, AIJ personal communication, November 22, 2017).

Flooding of the old airstrip on November 22, 2017 (Toby Anangnuk Jr)
Environmental Monitoring to Create Policy Change

**Usteq**: surface caves in, erodes  
**uste-** to erode; to chip; to cave in

- **Usteq** is specific to Arctic Alaska  
- **Stafford Act** does not recognize erosion as a hazard, nor is it eligible for funding

![Usteq in Nunapitchuk, Alaska (Robin Bronen AIJ)](image1)

![Usteq in Elson Lagoon – Utqiagvik (Ben Jones UAF)](image2)
Indigenous Science  Western Science

Erosion  Flooding

Permafrost Degradation

Social Indicators  Environmental Indicators

Iterative Evaluation

Adaptation & Resilience

Protect In-Place  Managed Retreat  Relocation
Engage U.S. Federal Government:

**WHITE HOUSE:**
Explore Federal role in addressing climate change-related displacement, needs of affected communities, and institutional barriers to community relocation.

**US CONGRESS:**
Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change

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First Peoples and Indigenous Peoples
Declaration on Climate-Forced Displacement

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Future

• Documentation of Usteq
  • Continue compiling storm narratives;

• Support and strengthen environmental monitoring;

  Develop community-based social monitoring – usteq’s impact on health and well-being

• Identify Social and Environmental Relocation Indicators

• Policy Changes to create governance framework embedded with human rights protections
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• Native Village of Nunapitchuk
• Native Village of Port Heiden
• Native Village of Kwinhagak
• Native Village of Shishmaref
• Native Village of Teller
• Native Village of Unalakleet
• Chinik Eskimo Community
• Native Village of Elim
• Native Village of Eyak
• City of Kivalina
• Native Village of Kivalina
• Village of Kotlik