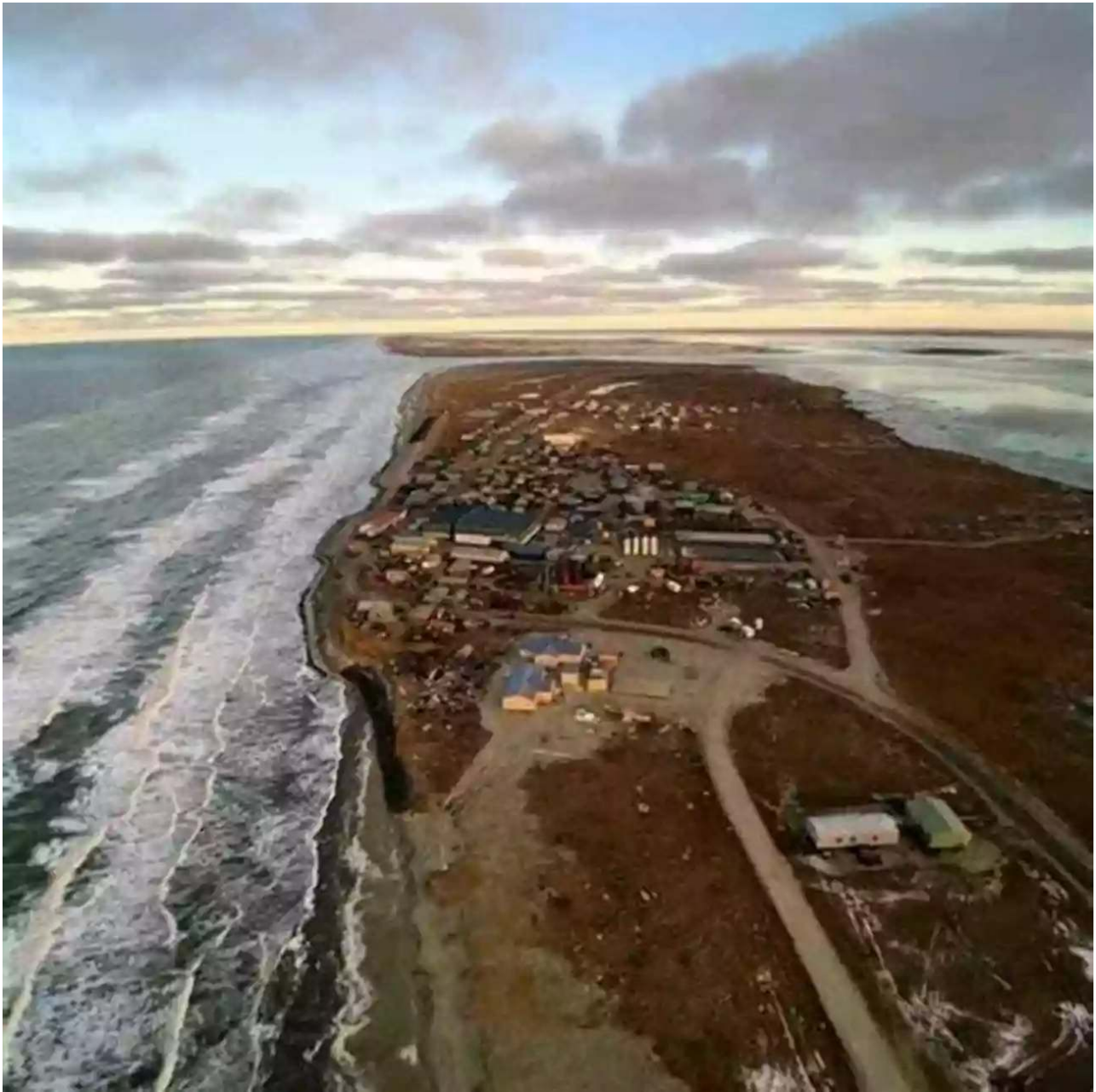


An Ethnography of Climate Change in Shishmaref Alaska: Witnessing the Devastating Impacts on a Community's Identity and Survival

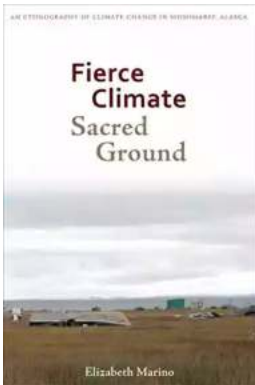
Alaska, known for its stunning landscapes and untouched wilderness, is experiencing the profound effects of climate change. Among the many affected areas, Shishmaref, a small Inupiaq Eskimo community located on an island in the Chukchi Sea, is facing an uncertain future as rising temperatures and melting ice threaten its very existence.



The History of Shishmaref and Its Connection to the Environment

To fully grasp the significance of climate change in Shishmaref, it is important to understand the deep-rooted relationship between the community and its environment. For centuries, the Inupiaq Eskimo people have relied on hunting, fishing, and gathering for sustenance and cultural preservation. They have

developed a profound knowledge of the land and sea, understanding the delicate balance that sustains their way of life.



Fierce Climate, Sacred Ground: An Ethnography of Climate Change in Shishmaref, Alaska

by Felipe Adan Lerma (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 2567 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 134 pages

Screen Reader : Supported



Shishmaref, a barrier island, has historically provided shelter and resources to the community. Its isolation kept traditions and customs intact, forging a strong sense of identity and belonging. However, the changing climate threatens to erase this unique cultural heritage.

The Visible Effects: Erosion and Displacement

Over the past few decades, Shishmaref has experienced increasingly severe coastal erosion due to the lack of sea ice, a natural barrier that protects the island from powerful storms and waves. As winter temperatures rise and ice formation becomes sporadic, the island's vulnerable shores are left exposed, leading to rapid erosion.



Residents of Shishmaref watch helplessly as their homes, playgrounds, and burial grounds vanish into the sea. The sense of displacement is profound, as families are forced to relocate inland, severing ties with their ancestral homes. This physical displacement is not just a loss of property but also a tearing apart of communal bonds.

Precarious Subsistence: Hunting and Fishing Challenges

The Inupiaq Eskimo people have relied on hunting and fishing for generations, but the changing climate poses significant challenges to this way of life. The warmer temperatures are altering migration patterns, disrupting the traditional

hunting and fishing seasons. Species population dynamics are shifting, leaving the community struggling to adapt.

Fisheries that once provided sustenance and economic stability are diminishing, leaving a void in the community's traditional food system. This has led to increased dependence on expensive store-bought goods, jeopardizing the physical and cultural health of the community.

The Spirit of Resilience: Shishmaref's Response to Climate Change

Although Shishmaref faces immense challenges, the community is not willing to succumb to a grim fate. Instead, they have become resilient, fighting for their survival and cultural heritage.



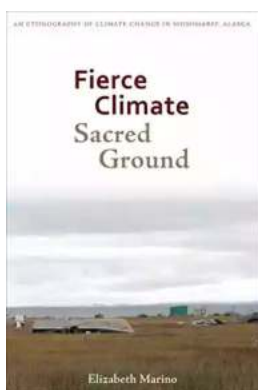
Community members have actively engaged in discussions with climate scientists, policymakers, and other stakeholders to raise awareness about their

plight. They have successfully advocated for financial support to build seawalls and other infrastructure to protect their homes from erosion.

Furthermore, the Inupiaq Eskimo people are exploring alternative subsistence techniques and diversifying their livelihoods to adapt to changing environmental conditions. They are combining traditional knowledge with scientific research to create innovative strategies that harmonize with the shifting ecosystem.

The ethnography of climate change in Shishmaref offers a chilling glimpse into the devastating impacts of environmental transformation on a community's identity and survival. The experience of the Inupiaq Eskimo people serves as a stark warning to the world, urging us to take immediate action to mitigate climate change.

Shishmaref, steeped in history and culture, is not merely a tragic case study but a testament to the spirit of human resilience. As we witness their struggle against the forces of nature, it becomes clear that humanity's fight against climate change is intrinsically linked to preserving our diverse cultural tapestry.



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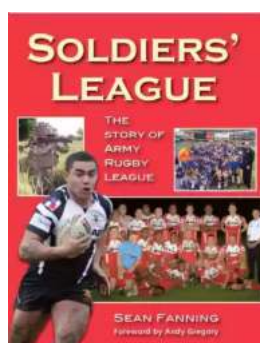
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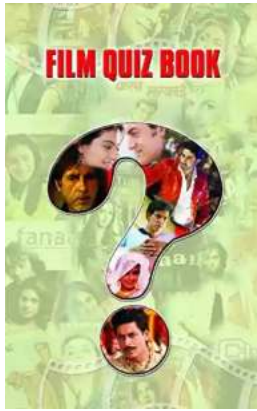
With three roads and a population of just over 500 people, Shishmaref, Alaska seems like an unlikely center of the climate change debate. But the island, home to Iñupiaq Eskimos who still live off subsistence harvesting, is falling into the sea, and climate change is, at least in part, to blame. While countries sputter and stall over taking environmental action, Shishmaref is out of time.

Publications from the New York Times to Esquire have covered this disappearing village, yet few have taken the time to truly show the community and the two millennia of traditions at risk. In *Fierce Climate, Sacred Ground*, Elizabeth Marino brings Shishmaref into sharp focus as a place where people in a close-knit, determined community are confronting the realities of our changing planet every day. She shows how physical dangers challenge lives, while the stress and uncertainty challenge culture and identity. Marino also draws on Shishmaref's experiences to show how disasters and the outcomes of climate change often fall heaviest on those already burdened with other social risks and often to communities who have contributed least to the problem. Stirring and sobering, *Fierce Climate, Sacred Ground* proves that the consequences of unchecked climate change are anything but theoretical.



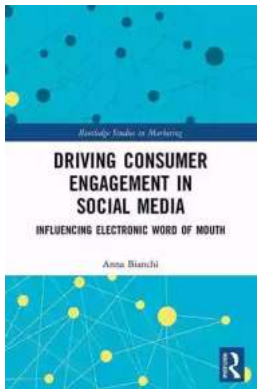
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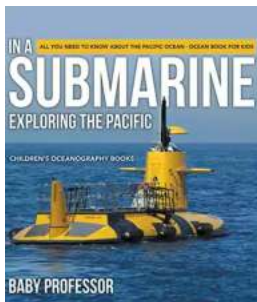
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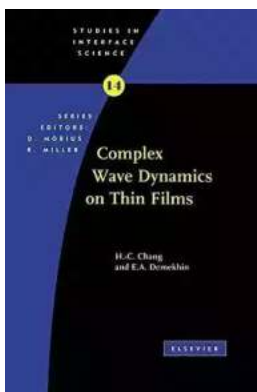
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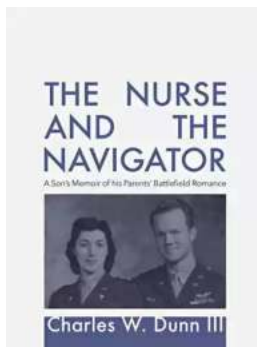
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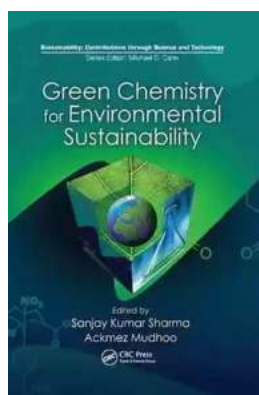
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