

Siku: Knowing Our Ice. Documenting Inuit Sea-Ice Knowledge and Use

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Book Reviews

SIKU: KNOWING OUR ICE. DOCUMENTING INUIT SEA-ICE KNOWLEDGE AND USE. Igor Krupnik, Claudio Aporta, Shari Gearheard, Gita J. Laidler, and Lene Kielsen Holm (eds.). New York: Springer, 2010. 501 pp. \$99.95 (hardcover). ISBN 978-90-481-8648-8.

With the current concerns about the retreat of the Arctic sea ice over the last decade or so, it has become increasingly evident that society needs to tap into the deep reserves of knowledge about the history of sea ice that is possessed by the First Peoples of the Arctic region. This volume consists of 20 chapters gathered during research as part of the International Polar Year and involved collaboration between “western” social scientists and Inuit hunters and villagers from Arctic areas. The studies range across the Arctic from Alaska to Greenland. The book is divided into four parts; Part I includes five chapters that document “Inuit observations of ice, climate and change.” These chapters cover observations from Qeqertaq, West Greenland, Baffin Island/Foxe Basin, Gambell, Alaska, St Lawrence Island, Alaska, and more broadly Greenland. The chapters include black and white photographs of ice conditions, and maps and graphs that deal with the changing conditions in these areas. Part II is concerned with the use of ice by the Inuit and consists of four chapters that deal with indigenous knowledge integrated with modern technologies, including the utilization of modern GPS and mapping methods.

Part III of the book introduces four chapters that deal with issues of “Learning, Knowing, and Preserving the Knowledge.” This chapter includes discussion of an Inupiaq sea-ice dictionary, and analyses of changing sea-ice conditions. The last section, Part IV, consists of six chapters grouped under the heading of “SIKU and Siku: Opening New Perspectives.” I was not clear about the division between Part III and Part IV as the latter had several chapters dealing with terms for sea ice within the different regions of the Arctic covered in this volume. The volume ends with two appendixes, some interesting color plates, and an extensive geographic/subject index.

This volume is probably not intended for the general reader of Arctic materials; but for those at all interested in trying to gain some insights into the impacts that the current climate change are creating, this volume offers a detailed evaluation of how the native peoples are being affected by the changes in climate and in particular the changes in their major transportation and hunting milieu.

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