

Ensuring Wellbeing in Times of Environmental
Change:
A Case Study of Strategies Employed by Yup'ik
Women During the Salmon Decline of 2000

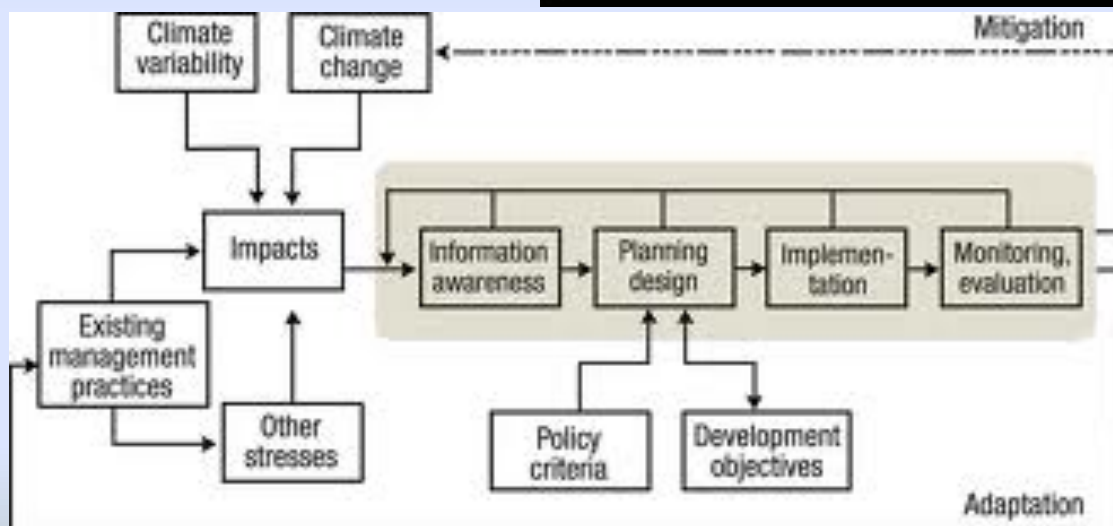
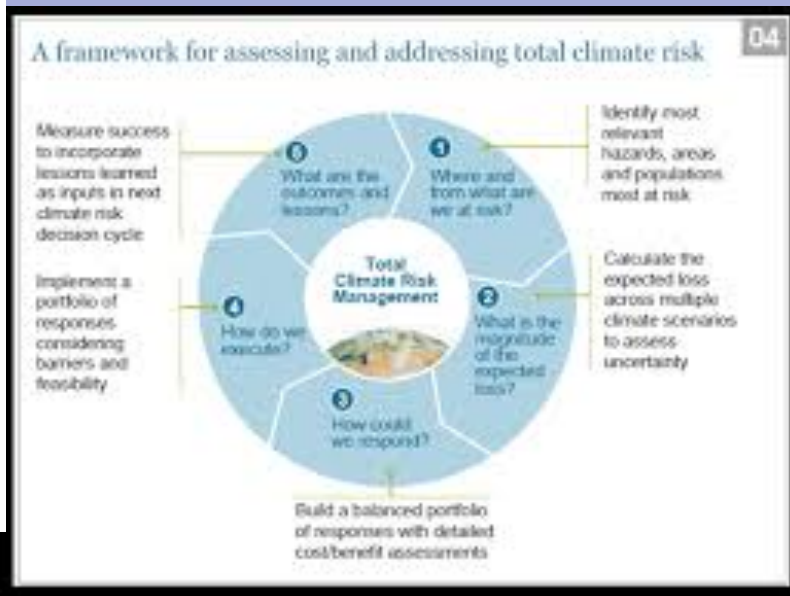
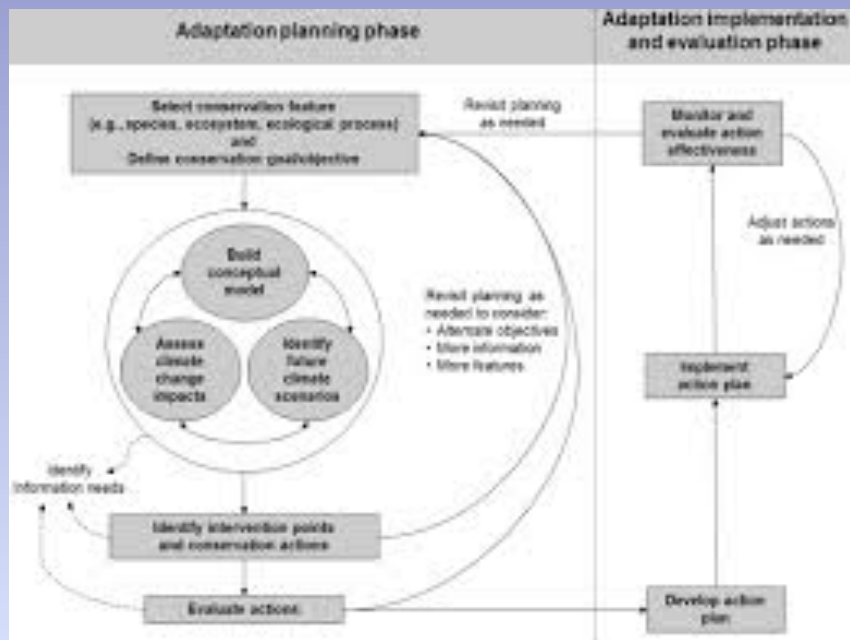
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I wish to thank and acknowledge the women who so kindly gave of their time; for the lifestyle they lead and their deep commitment to their families' well being; and whom continue practicing their traditional values and cultural ways... even in tough times. A deep inspiration to me.

A Story “Starring”

Traditional Knowledge, Values and Cultural
Practices That Can Enhance Well Being in
Times of Environmental Change

How I got here.....



General Locations of Women's Households



Context

(Calista, 2010)

- Unemployment is about 15 per cent; two villages are above 30% (State of Alaska, 2012).
- “The economic base has declined 33 per cent since 1995 due to a collapse in the annual salmon run”.
- 690 pounds of wild food per person harvested.
- Subsistence activities accounted for about 35% of individual’s economic well being.



Environmental/Climate Change Occurring—

- 3.8 degrees (F) change since the late 1940s (Shulski & Wendler, 2007).
- 2011 summer was one of the wettest remembered
- 2010 summer was one of the driest



How steep was the salmon decline?

(Yates, 2000)

- Kuskokwim River salmon monitoring counted only 511 salmon passing by July 8, 2000 -- typically it's 10,000 salmon
- By one estimate, '5,000 to 10,000 households will be directly affected'



Strategies Women Used

1. Observe and monitored salmon runs through traditional means
 - Tapped into network
 - Observed changes
 - Relied on visual cues from early fishing
2. Prepared for the salmon/subsistence
3. Acknowledged food security solutions lies within households—began seek other solutions & ideas
4. Diversified into other available, traditionally sourced foods although prepared differently

Findings

- 1. Unexpected burden of work from both not enough traditional food assistance but food assistance sent not easily incorporated into a traditional subsistence household food system

Role of Elders

2. As bridges to new knowledge and for source of historical information

Idea of Naturally Embedded Strategies—that is traditional knowledge that helps to adapt to change.

- 3. Need to understand how subsistence based households and communities are adopting over time when resources decline.
- For instance: impact on replacement species;

How are households with a high percent of diet tied to subsistence, but whom are at or below poverty level, how are they adapting?

4. Ramification when one entity, State of Alaska, uses a discrete understanding of the environment; and traditional culture has a much more nuanced view/continuum.

Leads to ideas such as

- Place based resiliency—Building/Promoting the ability to bounce back and be better positioned for future events, knowing relocation is not an option--given the significant traditional, historic and cultural ties to the land.
- Harmonizing strategies ***Harmonizing Adaptation/Adaptive Capacity*** (Kersey, 2011): *Developing adaptation strategies/ adaptive capacity which aligns with a community's traditional values & cultural practices.*
- This requires understanding how subsistence based communities and households adapt over time when a subsistence resource declines.



Creating Harmonizing Adaptation Strategies: Promoting Household and
Community Well Being (Kersey 2012)