

## Surviving with tuktu (caribou)<sup>1</sup>

Devalynn Pokiak

Tuktoyaktuk Hunters and Trappers Council, P.O. Box 286, Tuktoyaktuk, NT, Canada XOE 1C0 (thtc@permafrost.com).

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### Introduction

I'm Devalynn Pokiak, from Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories. The name of my hometown means "it looks like a caribou" in our Inuvialuktun language.

I'm going to high school. My dad took me out of school to come to this conference for an experience, to see what he does in these places. It's my first time in a big meeting like this. It's pretty cool.

I'm an Inuvialuit hunter and trapper. In this Talking Circle we are Aboriginal, so far apart and yet we all have the same respect and relationship with the land. Without our tuktu (caribou) thousands of years ago, we wouldn't have been able to survive. I was also taught to use every part of tuktu that we kill. Tuktu gave us food, clothes, and even shelter.

Biologists want to try to help tuktu, but they aren't really helping them by moving their equipment right into tuktu territory, making tuktu move away. Studying them and then doing nothing to help them when they're done, just leaving their mark. And my generation will have to clean up all the mess that the government left behind.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is adapted from Devalynn Pokiak's contributions to the NACW Aboriginal Talking Circle.

### Traditional knowledge for survival

I believe what the elders say about wolves. Wolves need tuktu, and tuktu need the wolves. Wolves use tuktu for food. Tuktu need the wolves because wolves kill the unhealthy and weak that can't survive. They leave the strong tuktu. If wolves weren't there, the weak and unhealthy tuktu would have calves that are weak and unhealthy too.

Without the traditional knowledge that our elders taught us, we wouldn't be able to survive. My dad always took me out hunting, ever since I was a little kid. I know our land around us. I know what kind of animals we hunt and what we need. I notice that most of my friends don't ever go out hunting, and their parents don't know how to hunt. So my friends don't have a chance to learn what I know about the land. I always try and talk to them and tell them stories, what I hear from elders.

### Learning from others

I really find this conference interesting to come to, and know more about what's happening. I know about my side of the territory, and now I am trying to learn what people from other places are talking

about. Even though we're all different, and we talk different languages and have different cultures, we all do have the same respect and the same relationships

with the land. I find it really interesting that we're all somehow connected, all of us. We're all the same. Quyanainni, thank you.

### How Tuk got its name

Although *Tuktuyaktumiut* live in the modern world, we try to hold onto our stories, like this one about how Tuk got its name.

As the story goes, there were some caribou that were about to cross to a point of land near where Tuk is today. A young woman was sick, so the people told her, "Don't look out at the caribou, you're sick. Something might happen to the caribou." She agreed, but when the caribou started swimming across to the point she peeked, and the caribou turned into rocks. To this day, you can see the stone caribou when the water is low. That is how Tuktoyaktuk or, "something that looks like a caribou," got its name.

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