



Nunatsiavut, “Our Beautiful Land”: Inuit Landscape Perception in the Eastern Canadian Arctic

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ethno-

ecology

peoples

relationships between

culture

language

living

organisms

&

their

environments

ethnoecology

how people understand their local ecosystems

&

their relationships with the environment



ecology

ethnoecology

landscape



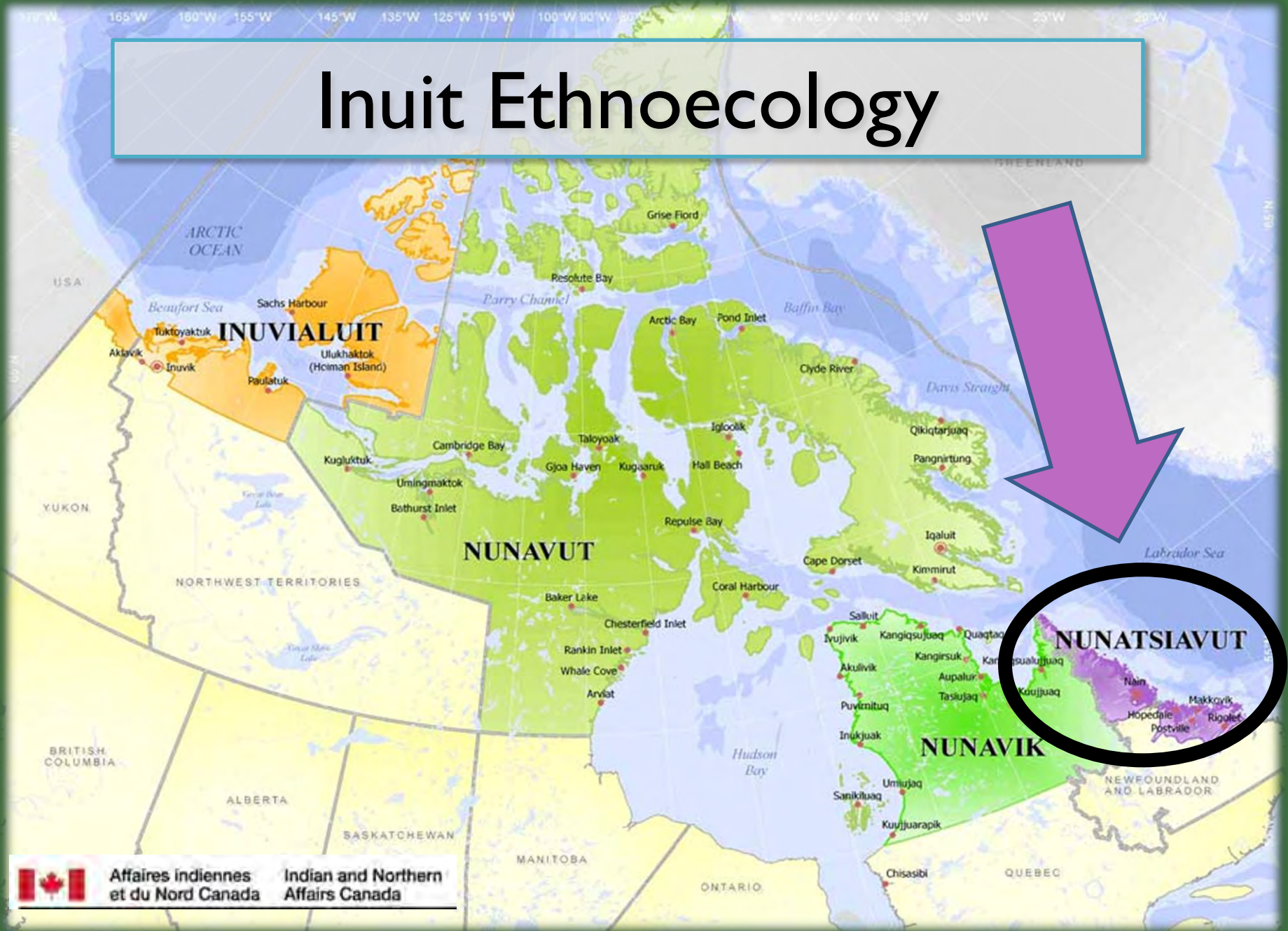
quantitative
experimental

people-centered
approach focused on
traditional indigenous knowledge

Project Objectives

- Documentation and conservation of Nunatsiavut Inuit traditional knowledge
- Alternative perspectives on the environment:
 - habitats and places important for traditional activities
 - inform land management and development initiatives
 - recognize fragile habitats and recent changes
 - prioritize conservation efforts

Inuit Ethnoecology



Affaires indiennes
et du Nord Canada

Indian and Northern
Affairs Canada

How do Inuit of Nunatsiavut name and categorize their local landscape?



How do Inuit of Nunatsiavut name and categorize their local landscape?

Objectives

- what types of places are named (or un-named)?
- what types of organisms are associated with which types of places/habitats?

Study site: Nunatsiavut “our beautiful land”

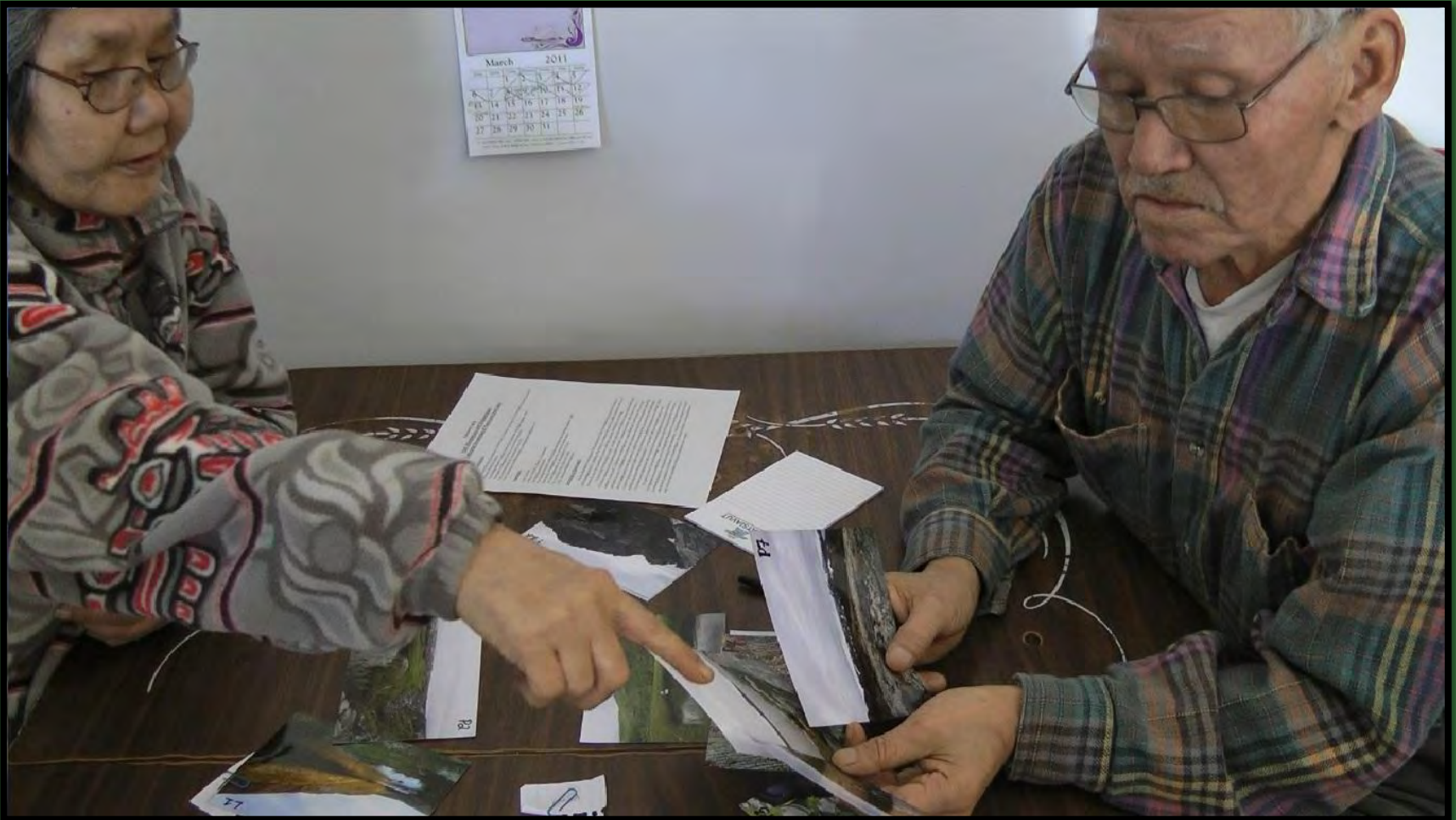


GoogleMaps

- Canadian Shield
- southern Inuit territory
= unique subarctic flora
- 4% of Inuit in Canada
- Inuktitut (language):
27% fluent
most aged > 55 years
= high risk of language extinction

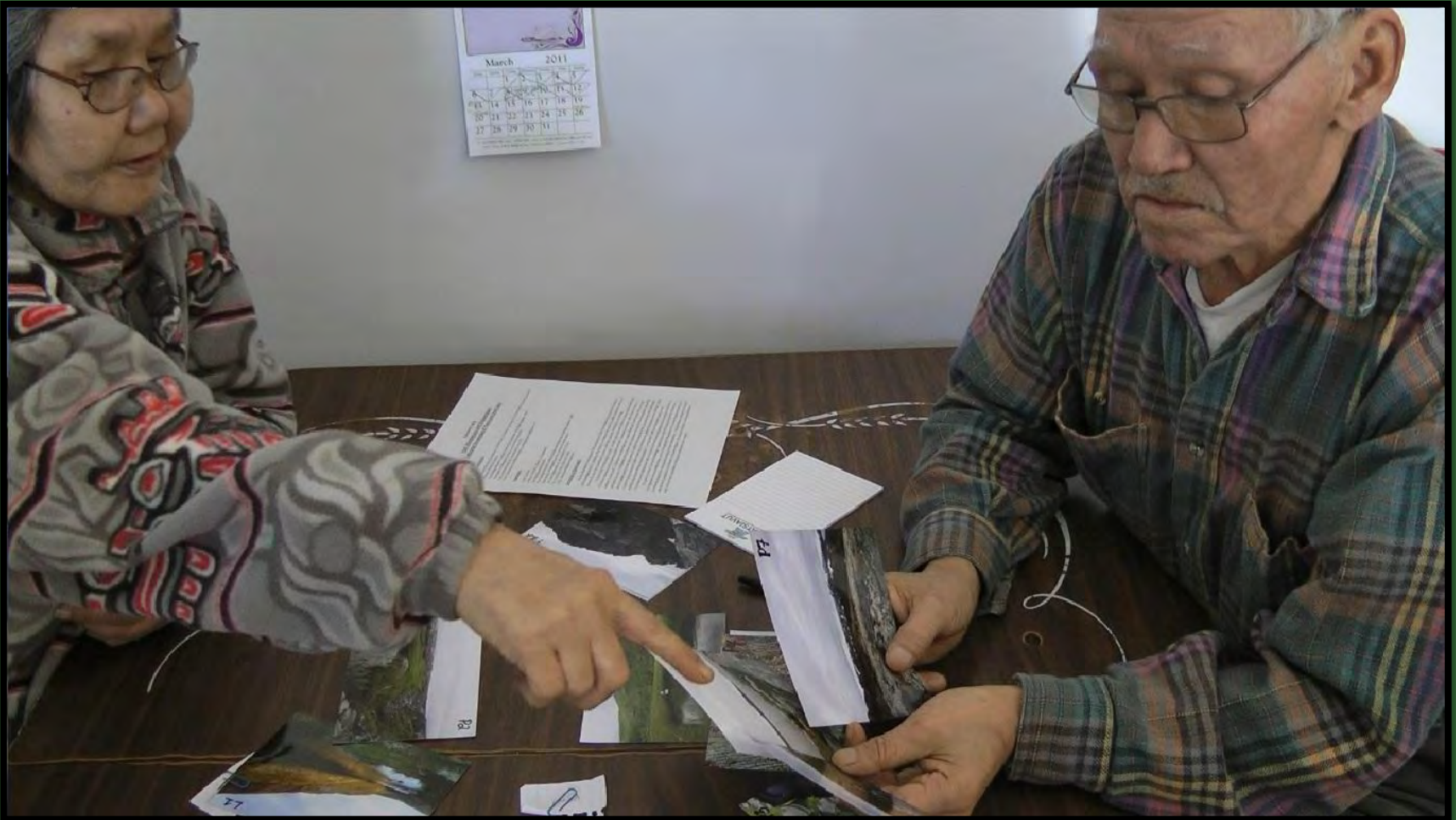
Methods:

Semi-directed interviews with photos

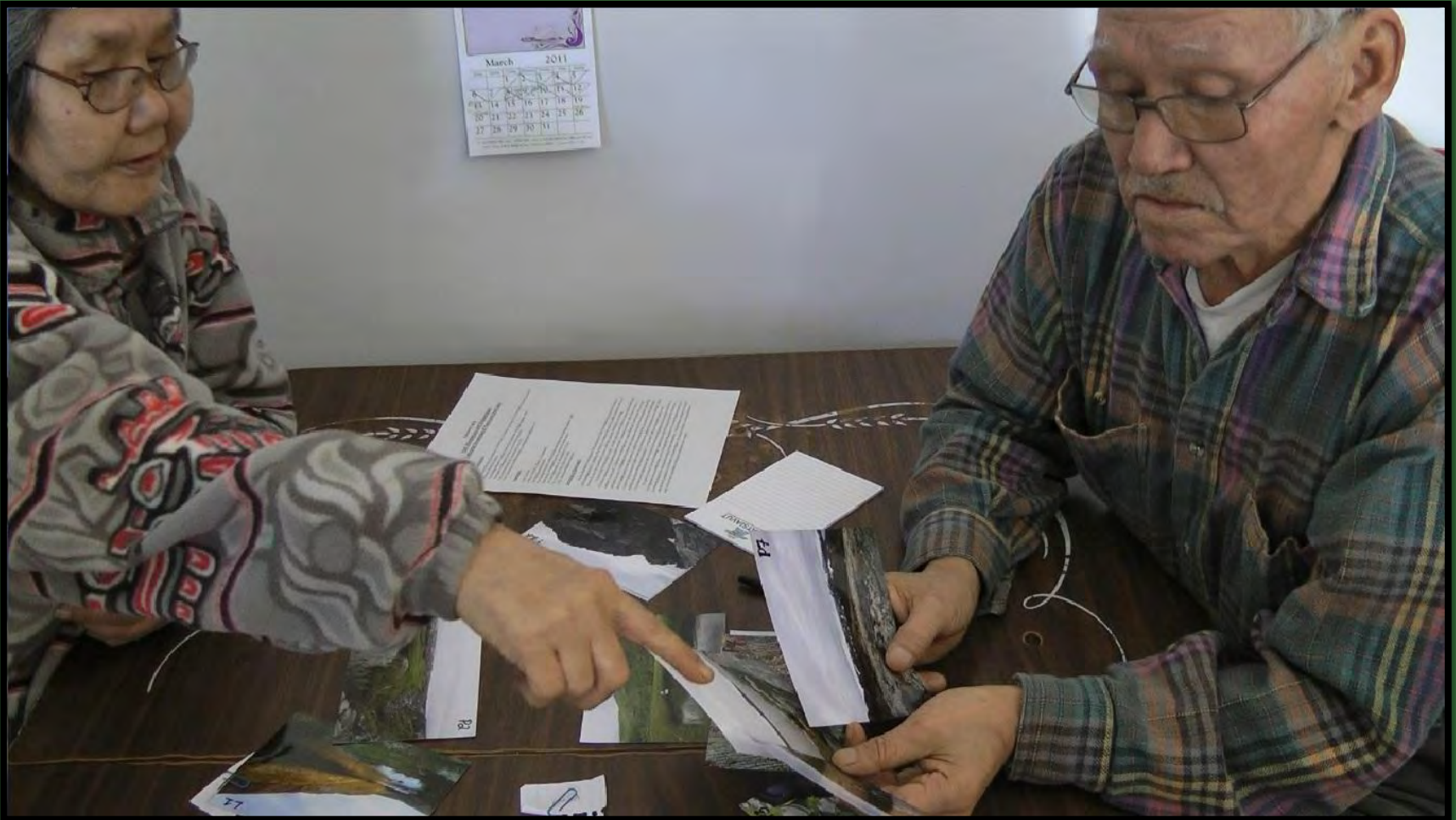


Interviews:

- March 2011, > 32 hours recorded
- 18 participants, mean age: 67 (54-81)
- in homes / on “the land”
- 30 min – 2 hours / interview



- # Interviews:
- prior informed consent
 - ethics approval by Université de Montréal
 - permission from Nunatsiavut Government

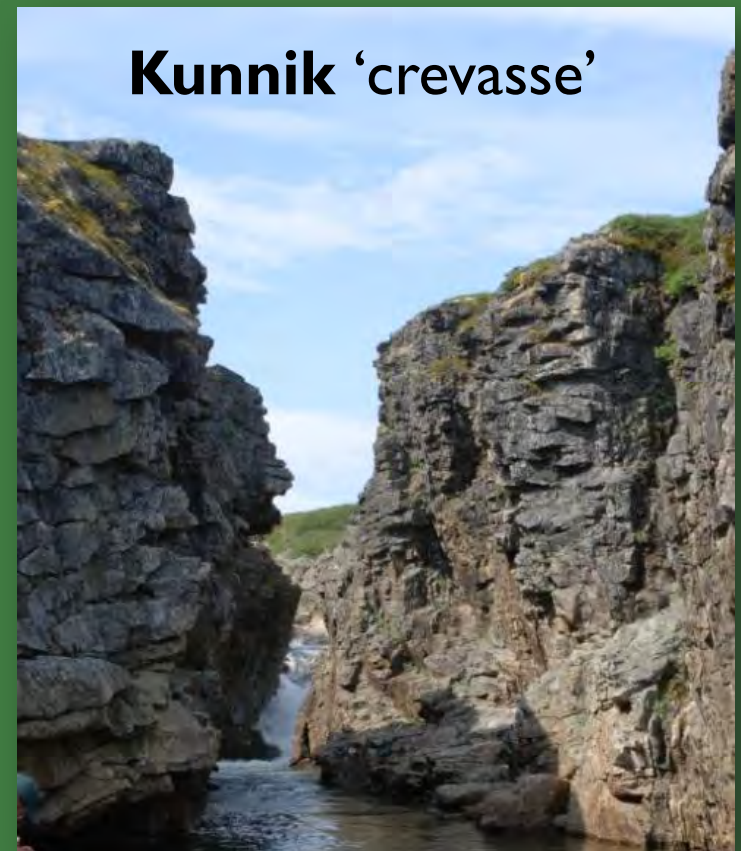


Results

- **Most-frequently mentioned categories**
 - **geophysical, hydrological, ecological elements**

Most-frequently mentioned categories

Geophysical elements



Most-frequently mentioned categories

Hydrological elements

'lake'



tasik

'pond'

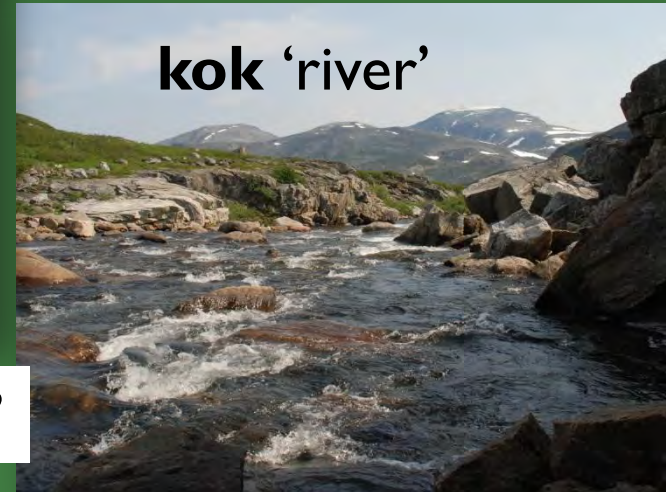


kangitsuk 'bay'



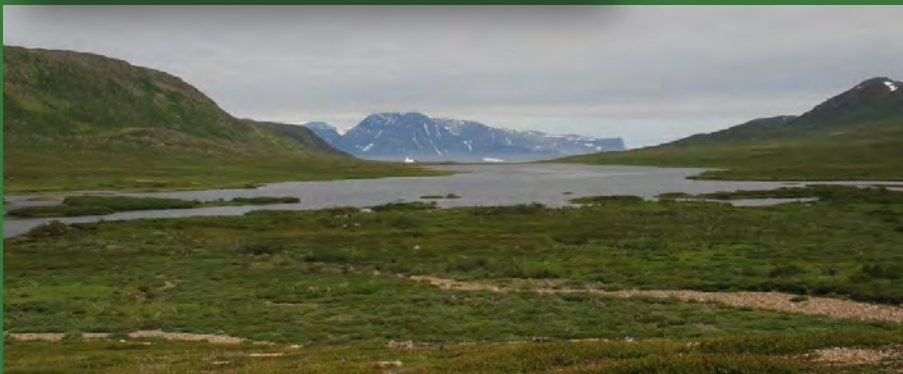
Kolluttuk 'waterfall'

kok 'river'

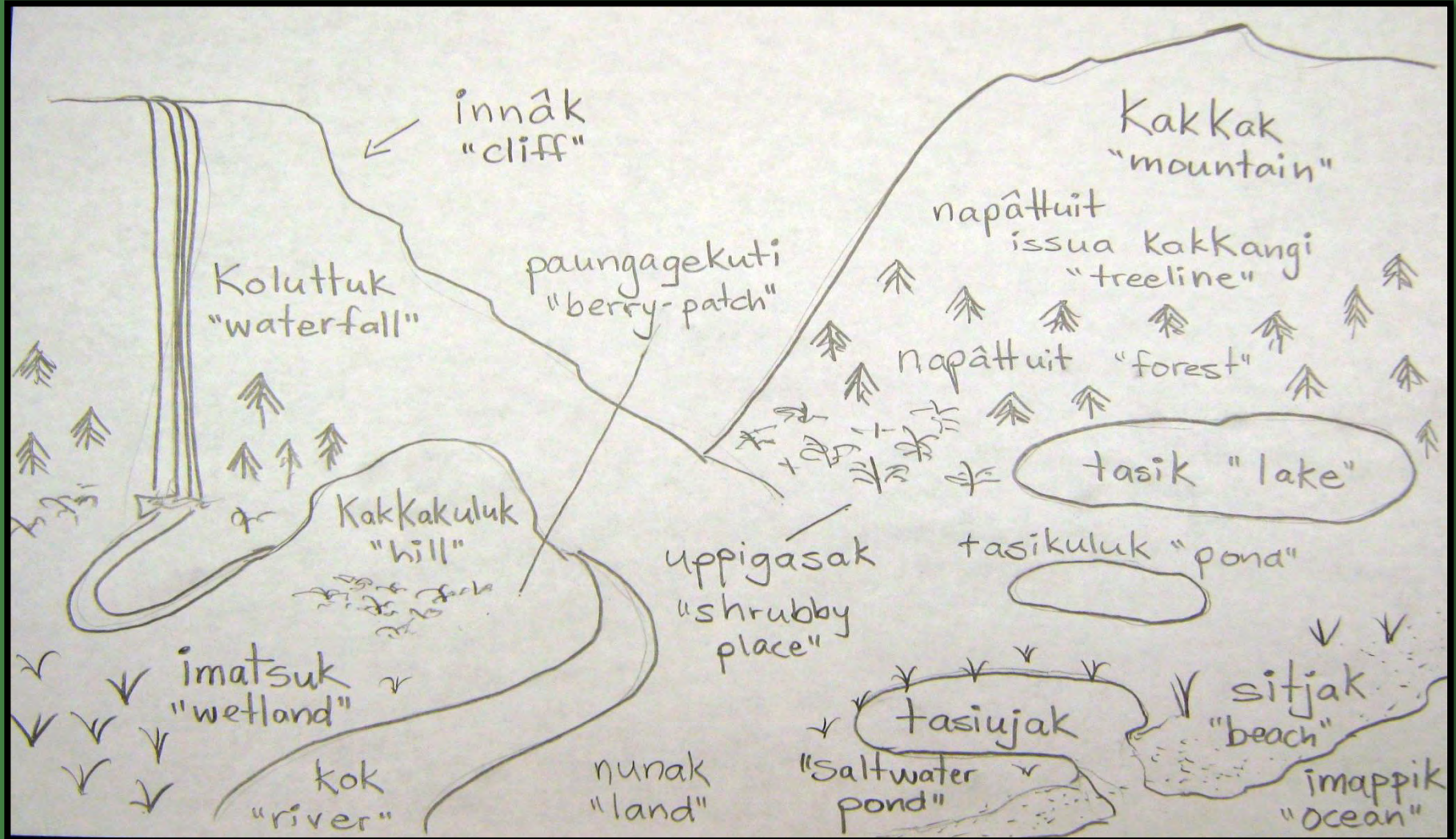


Most-frequently mentioned categories

Ecological elements



Generalized landscape



Results

- **Most-frequently mentioned categories**
 - geophysical, hydrological, ecological elements
- **Important folk ecotopes (landscape units)**

Important folk ecotopes

kimminaKautik 'berry-patch'



Important folk ecotopes

Kigittakulukuluk = very small island (therefore useless)



Kigittaumanik = almost-island



Kigittak = island

*** important for:**
navigation
finding resources
(plants, eggs, etc.)

simikutak = island close to a bay



Results

- **Most-frequently mentioned categories**
 - geophysical, hydrological, ecological elements
- **Important folk ecotopes (landscape units)**
 - navigation/travelling, finding resources
- **Over- and under-represented categories**

Over- and under-represented categories

imappik
'sea/ocean'



ikkagok
(salt-water area)



rock

tasik
'lake/pond'



ujagok
(freshwater area / on land)



Coastal habitats

ujagalak
'rocky beach'



makKâgalak
'muddy beach'



sitjak
'shore/beach'



Kaittuk
'flat rock'



innâk
'cliff'



Over- and under-represented categories



appik

(*Rubus chamaemorus*):
edible, tea



tulligunnak

(*Rhodiola rosea*):
medicinal, edible



manilik

(seabird eggs):
edible



paunnak

(*Chamerion latifolium*):
edible, smoked, tea

Project Outputs

- Step toward conservation of:

- Inuit traditional knowledge
- subarctic biodiversity



- Returning traditional knowledge to the community in accessible formats:

- workshops with elders and youth
- community information sessions
- ethnobotanical booklets
- posters in English/French/Inuktitut



Thank-you, merci, nakummek!



Elders, Translators & Community of Nain



Université  de Montréal

 Institut de recherche en biologie végétale

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ArcticNet
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