

The Ancient Inupiaq People

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All of downtown, this part of Barrow essentially is on the village of Ukiavit. So the site of Utkiavik you can see its probably hard see, distinguish the land ends and the sea begins. We're looking again out towards the west towards the Chukchi Sea and the mounds that you see here in the foreground are actually house mounds. So what we're looking at if you can imagine the village of Utkiavik we're talking about 1400 A.D. and earlier. What we're looking at is the collapsed houses, the houses were semi-sub terrarium they were dug out of the ground and then sods were piled up and to hold up the sods we have whalebone rafters and driftwood. So what we have left is kind of collapsed and we're standing on the top of house mounds. So a lot of this was excavated in the 1980's but a lot of it is still here. This is a huge, huge village and so you can see there's house mounds out here, in the summer time you can actually see some of the whalebone rafters poking up through the sods of the tundra and so on. And you can see it's a pretty good place, you can look out to the Chukchi Sea and watch to see what's happening with the ice and when the leaves are going to open up. Although western science shows up here in 1881 this part of the world is inhabited and people are doing science here; they're observing changes, they're hypothesis testing for thousands of thousands of years before western science shows up with the first International Polar Year in 1881. Prior to 1881 we have the whole exploration of the Arctic and the whole northwest passage, the Franklin expedition, all of that going on that leads to Yankee whaling which makes Barrow really in 1881, it's really well known to the western scientific community. And it's because of the Inupiaq interest in science and ability and willingness to cooperate with western scientist that we do have this really rich record of scientific data going back to 1881 and the first International Polar Year. And again it's this idea that although western science starts to show up in 1881 you have thousands of thousands of years of Inupiaq science going on here in barrow at Utkiavik and other archeological sites and other villages in the area.