

Nuiqsut on the Colville

Land of Sky, Tundra, and Water



Nuiqsut on the Colville

Land of Sky, Tundra, and Water

Produced by Stephen Cysewski, photographer, and
Matthew Sturm, Santosh Panda, and Margaret Cysewski,
permafrost scientists.

We created this book to document Nuiqsut and its
changing landscape for the people who live there.

Digital Photo Archive: <http://www.cysewski.com/nuiqsut/index.html>

This was supported of Alaska EPSCoR at the University of Alaska Fairbanks under the Cooperative Agreement OIA-1208927 from the National Science Foundation. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Science Foundation.



The Colville River Delta is a land of vast skies, broad river channels, wetlands, and water. It is home to caribou, moose, and countless birds. The Inupiat of Nuiqsut have fished and hunted these lands for thousands of years. It is a land where the river has always migrated slowly back and forth, cutting new channels and leaving old sloughs. It is a land where ancient permafrost underlies the tundra. But today the permafrost is beginning to thaw and this seemingly timeless landscape is changing.





In 1973, twenty-seven Barrow families moved to Nuiqsut, a traditional hunting, gathering, and fishing place on the Colville River Delta. They spent the first winter in tents until houses were constructed. Nuiqsut has become a thriving village with many of the first settlers' children and grandchildren.



















The Colville River is the lifeblood of Nuiqsut. The river is full of stories, memories, and life events that are important to the people of Nuiqsut.











The Colville River is changing.
The channel near Nuiqsut has
eroded 160 feet. Thawing
permafrost allows erosion to
happen more quickly.

151°0'W

150°58'W

70°14'N



Nisqually is on a side channel of the Colville River. The two access points to the Colville have been filling in, making it difficult to navigate.

151°0'W

150°55'W

70°15'N



70°12'30"N

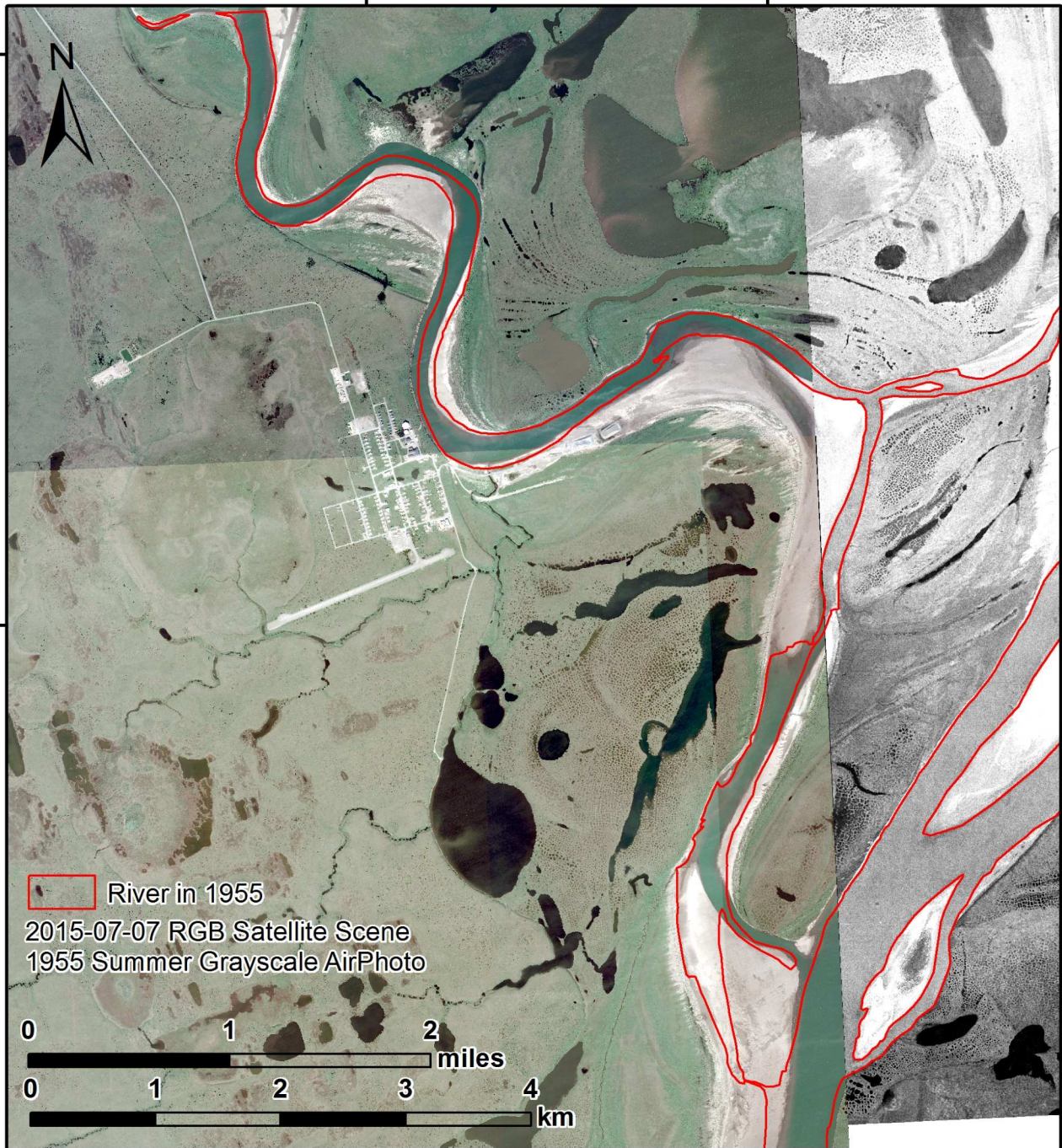


River in 1955

2015-07-07 RGB Satellite Scene
1955 Summer Grayscale AirPhoto

0 1 2 miles

0 1 2 3 4 km











The community has seen changes firsthand: willows are in a new places and larger than before, record summer temperatures, warmer water temperatures, more bugs, freezing rain in the winter, and spring flooding.



















Resilience is part of being Inupiat.
They will adapt to changes taking place
now, as they have adapted to changes
in the past. Timeless yet changing.

