

How I see Newtok in my eyes is a village inside a small island. This is my home, and every single year the land slowly fades away, feet by feet. When I was young, the land was further away from my house than it is today. When the land was still there, we used to play around, and we would also pick raspberries and some blueberries before it all fell to the Ningliq River. This generation that is growing up, would never know how it used to look, but they would know by stories that are being told now.

The land that is eroding wasn't a big problem back then. Since the erosion came closer, we felt concerned about it and took action. Back then we just lived peacefully, but now that the land is fading slowly it's never the same. Some of the people had to move out to another relative's home because their house is near to the Ningliq River.

The memories are going to be there but not with the land we shared it with. Moving to a new place would be strange for us because we will leave our memorable place. The few next generations would never know, what it is like living here then and now. Here in Newtok, we live our best, we try and make it more memorable here, before we move to the new place called 'Mertarvik' but it would still be called 'Newtok.' Like they always say, 'Take care of the land, in return it will take care of you.' Here and there we didn't listen, which made the land angry at us, so it eroded rapidly.

I ask them a question: How was it like before it eroded, and how is it now?

Jimmy Charles Jr. "The Ningliq River used to be thin. Whenever winter comes they would travel more easily near the Ningliq. When the Ningliq River was still thin, the two ponds were there and many birds would land. The Ningliq River is growing, but a small island appeared. The Ningliq River near our village used to be shallow, and near the hills, the river used to be deep. Nowadays they swapped places. They didn't use to go in through the docks that we use now, they would go through the one that is behind the airport. Now that is all I am going to talk about, my interview is done."

He said in Yupik Me "Quyana!" Which means 'Thank you

Margaret Patrick "It was a beautiful place, a wonderful place. We used to berry pick and there were blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, and salmonberries. When I was young we would go hunt rabbits and birds, and we would go find mouse food. We will always get wild chili, wild spinach, tea leaves. We would also go look for eggs. We would get grass to braid the fishes to hang. We would also get sour docks. There are many things that we would get before the land eroded. Nowadays is poor because we hardly hunt or get anything now. We would always play around the land before it eroded. We would go needlefish hunt for the fun of it. In winter time, we would always go skiing around that part of land before it fell. My brother and I would sit around to set a trap for catching a fox. We would also get smelt around the Ningliq River. We would also go ice picking in winter. When the two ponds were there, there would always be people skating. It is still going but barely. I am done for now."

She also speaks in Yupik Me "Quyana!"

One of the Elementary Teacher's "When I was young, the land was so far away from us, and there used to be a road there, we would always walk there to go see the dumping place that used to be there. It would always take 10 to 15 minutes to get there, depending on how the person walks. There used to be a bump there and we used to play. We would always go berry picking before it fell. We would always go red berry picking. We were able to walk up to the 3 small hills and to the clearings for geese and egg hunting. When we are here in this place, we weren't able to see the Ningliq River.

The land use to be stiff and nowadays there they are becoming swamps. The ponds are growing dry from here on out. The land used to be high and now we noticed that it was growing flat each year."

Me: Quyana!

Carolyn George "Before the land started eroding rapidly, there used to be a boardwalk that leads to a dumpster a mile away from Niugtaq towards the Ningliq. It would take us about 25 minutes to walk to the edge of the Ningliq. There were several ponds in between Niugtaq and the Ningliq where my grandma Betty Ann Tom would set traps for muskrat and pick different kinds of berries. In the winter time, we would go ice skating in those ponds and collect tayaranuq for seal soup. As years went on the land started eroding and residents of Niugtaq tried to put a barrier between the Ningliq and the eroding land to try and slow it down or stop it. But every time the wind picked up and the tide goes up the land eroded no matter what they did to try and stop it. So the dumpster was moved from the Ningliq to across the river from Niugtaq. Now the erosion is just a few feet from the first home it's going to swallow which is my grandma and grandpa Jimmy & Betty Toms house."

Me "Quyana."

These stories the people of Newtok told me are similar, but with different experiences they had. They have made memories they simply cannot forget. The land won't last forever, but the stories won't disappear. They built memories, they had experience, they walked on that land. Then the land eroded away, making the next generation not know what the land was like long ago.

