PITQUHIRNIKKUT ILIHAUTINIQ
KITIKMEOT HERITAGE SOCIETY

Harnessing the potential of 360˚ photography for promotion of Inuit knowledge of place and place names

During the week of August 24th to 30th, 2015 the Kitikmeot Heritage Society collaborated on an innovative heritage-recording research project intended to investigate the potential that 360˚ photography or photosphere photography has for the recording and the communication of Inuit place-based knowledge. The principal investigators in the study are Darren Keith, Researcher, Kitikmeot Heritage Society, Dr. Peter Dawson, Department of Anthropology, University of Calgary, Denis Gadbois, Department of Art, Photography & 3D fabrication, University of Calgary, and local Inuit heritage specialist Luke Suluk. This project was supported in part through a heritage grant from the Department of Culture and Heritage, Government of Nunavut.

Phoro: Luke Suluk being interviewed at a Tunillarvik or offering stone on Sentry Island. (Peter Dawson 2015)

Photo: Billy Ukutak being interviewed at the Beluga-Kayak game. Children or adults seated in the kayak outlines would try to harpoon a loop that was dragged quickly by the players. (Darren Keith 2015)

The research team spent two days on the island of Arvia'juaq. Oral history interviews were recorded by Colleen Hughes, a graduate student in the department of Anthropology, University of Calgary with Luke Suluk and Billy Ukutak at significant cultural features. Denis Gadbois, a specialist in 360˚ photography, recorded several areas and sites using a high-resolution camera mounted on a 25 ft. pole. These images will be post-processed to produce photospheres. The second phase of photosphere creation involved using a drone to take photos of the island from high altitude.

Above Photo:
Denis Gadbois taking high resolution images for the creation of photospheres. (Peter Dawson 2015)

Below Photo:
Denis Gadbois prepares project drone for test flight at Qikiqtaarjuk. (Darren Keith 2015)

The photographs taken in the field will be post-processed this fall into photospheres. A website will be developed that will allow users to take a photosphere tour of Arvia'juaq. Users will begin by investigating the island from high altitude. "Hotspots" will be identified which users can select to investigate specific features and clusters of features at high resolution.

Pilot Study of Photosphere Collection by Arviat Landusers

The project also involved an initiative to train active four Arviat landusers to operate Ricoh Theta cameras to capture photosphere images of named places and heritage sites that they visit during their normal subsistence activities. The Arviat Hunters and Trappers Organization hosted a training session for landusers that was lead by University of Calgary Archaeologist Peter Dawson. The images collected during fall subsistence activities will be collected and displayed on a project website to share with the community.

Above Photo:
Four landusers now have recording packages that include a Ricoh Theta Camera, camera instructions and hardware, an all weather notebook, topographic maps and a selfie-stick. (Peter Dawson 2015)

Below Photo:
Arviat hunter Colin Suluk taking photospheres of features on Arvia'juaq. Colin is one of the four landusers that will carry cameras into the field this fall. (Peter Dawson 2015)

Why Photospheres?

The sense of identity and the heritage of Nunavummiut are bound up in the immense expanse of land and sea that was once regularly travelled by Inuit. Inuktitut place names are repositories of knowledge, both through their meaning, and as references to more extensive oral traditions about place. A person's knowledge of place names and the physical places they represent makes concrete their relationship to the Nunavut territory. But how do we keep Nunavummiut experiencing the land and using its names? The Kitikmeot Heritage Society (KHS), in collaboration with its local and academic partners, would like to develop more tools to ensure that Nunavummiut continue to connection to named places. It is hoped that photospheres represent a way that Inuit can virtually experience their heritage.