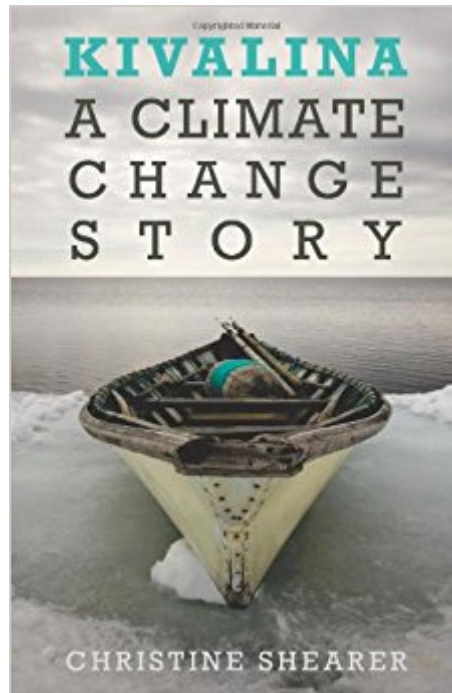




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# Kivalina: A Climate Change Story



## Synopsis

This book looks at the struggle of Kivalina, a small Alaska Native village that filed a legal claim against some of the world's largest fossil fuel companies for damaging their homeland and creating a false debate around climate change. Academic and journalist Christine Shearer explores the history leading up to the lawsuit, and its relationship to past misinformation campaigns involving lead, asbestos, and tobacco. The book also considers the interconnections between fossil fuels, the global political-economy, and disaster management. Kivalina's struggle for safe relocation, the book argues, is part of our common struggle to acknowledge and address climate change before it is too late.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Shearer provides an impressively concise and comprehensive history of the growth of corporate power in America; its influence on, entwinement with, and corruption of government; [and] corporate obfuscation of industrial hazards." - *Publisher's Weekly* (Starred review.) Shearer writes clearly about complex issues, and the book is well documented, making it easy for readers to expand their knowledge. Highly recommended for high school, college, university, and public libraries." - *Library Journal* "Best book of 2011: one of the most timely and important books to be published in 2011 -- and in the past decade." - Jeff Biggers, *The Huffington Post* 2012 Rachel Carson Environment Book Award (Honorable Mention) "In novelistic detail, Shearer recounts the science, politics, legal battles and human experience at one of the leading edges of climate change impact. In doing so, she...

tells the story not just of one village in Alaska, but of us all." - The Society of Environmental Journalists

This story is a tragedy, and not just because of what's happening to the people of Kivalina. It's a tragedy because it's unnecessary, the product, as the author shows, of calculation, deception, manipulation, and greed on the part of some of the biggest and richest companies on earth.

Bill McKibben, author of *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*: I watched the lights of the oil fields grow in intensity and proximity, although they were many miles away. The flaring of the gas became a harbinger of hard nights on call, due to increases in respiratory illness among our people. Compounding this were changes to the land and water around us, affecting the animals and their [habits].

This book provides an understanding of the obstacles I have been facing while working on the basic issues of promoting and protecting the health, culture, and traditions of our people.

Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak, board member of the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, founding member of REDOIL (Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands), and community health practitioner: Shearer pulls no punches in this extraordinary account of one Alaskan village's confrontation with the violence of climate change. Villagers sued fossil fuel companies for endangering their homeland and lying about it, underscoring the importance of sound science, traditional knowledge, and accurate information as critical ingredients for sustaining the climate justice movement. Shearer also considers the history of the Product Defense Industry, through which she links the politics of energy to a host of other sectors whose supporters have made it their business to manufacture doubt and misrepresentation about the risks associated with oil, coal, asbestos, lead, and tobacco. The casualties are adding up and they include public health, ecosystems, and our democracy. So where is the hope in all of this? It lies in the simple fact that the people of Kivalina fought back and struggled for a better world for themselves and for all of us.

David Naguib Pellow, member of the board of directors of Greenpeace USA, author of *Resisting Global Toxics: Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice*, and Don Martindale Professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota: Christine Shearer's *Kivalina: A Climate Change Story* is a fast and bumpy ride that begins with the history of outrageous corporate deceptions through public relations and legal campaigns, continuing with building of the coal-and-oil empire to fuel progress in the United States, leading to the horrendous politics of climate crisis, and finally arriving at its destination, a ground-zero of climate refugee, Kivalina; an Inupiat community along the Chukchi Sea coast of arctic Alaska. I was angry when I turned the last page. I urge you to get a copy, read it, share the story, and join the now global climate justice movement.

Subhankar Banerjee, writer, activist, and

photographer of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land; The climate catastrophe is real and growing, and this is the story of some of its first known victims, with many millions more to follow. This is an important tale of greed and propaganda, scientific corruption, and the bill coming due for our allowing a corporate elite to control and dictate our energy and environmental policies.

—John Stauber, founder of the Center for Media and Democracy; With Kivalina Christine Shearer has managed to do something quite remarkable, which is to take the incredibly complex geo/economic/political process of global climate change, present it in a way that is both comprehensible and compelling and then directly link it to one of the first bellwether communities to be affected by the process. The book is beautifully written and the community of Kivalina is a harbinger of what our failure to control our technology and our greed will be bringing to coastal communities and cities across the planet.

—Robert Gramling, coauthor of *Blowout in the Gulf: The BP Oil Spill Disaster and the Future of Energy in America* and professor of sociology at the University of Louisiana–Lafayette; Kivalina, Shishmaref, Point Hope; three of the first communities, in this case all in the Arctic of Alaska, that are casualties of global climate change. Household names? No. But they should be. Christine Shearer, in *Kivalina: A Climate Change Story*, presents the human and environmental evidence of frustration and devastation of one of these ancient Inupiat Eskimo villages in a detailed and compelling fashion. Citing the tobacco and asbestos examples of “profit at all costs” corporate obfuscation, she makes the case that climate change is the latest on this sorry list of the failure of our corporations and their supporters in the federal and state government to look past those profits to their dire consequences. Peter, Paul, and Mary in their famous folk song, “When Will They Ever Learn,” can add another verse. Christine Shearer will write it.

—Harvard Ayers, senior author of *Arctic Gardens: Voices from an Abundant Land* and professor emeritus of anthropology at Appalachian State University

Christine Shearer is a postdoctoral scholar in science, technology, and society studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a researcher for CoalSwarm, part of SourceWatch. She has previously worked at the KPFA Radio Evening News, the Center for Investigative Reporting, and the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis. Her work has appeared in academic and media publications including *National Geographic*, *Climate Progress*, *The Journal of Political Ecology*, and *Conservation Letters*. She holds a PhD in Sociology from UC Santa Barbara.

The book is about tobacco, lead poisoning, fossil fuels, global warming, and eventually Kivalina.

When one encounters a book like Christine Shearer's *Kivalina: A Climate Change Story* (2011) on the library shelf, one expects the story to have come to a resolution, but for the small Inupiaq village of Kivalina, the story is incomplete. The villagers know that global warming is destroying the small barrier island on which the village rests and that they must relocate. There is no government agency which oversees relocations, and they've twice picked a site to have both rejected by the federal government. The government, has, however, tried to stabilize the erosions while the legal battles and the delays continue. At the time the book was published, no resolution was in sight, and, in the words of one of the residents, the five year project which was in its eleventh year was destined to continue indefinitely into the future. The book will gain a little public interest, be forgotten, and Kivalina will become just another casualty of big oil and big government. The story of Kivalina only takes a few pages. The village exists because the Bureau of Indian Affairs put a school there in 1905 and told the nomadic Inupiaq people that their children had to be educated or the government would prosecute. Because transporting the children to school in winter was dangerous, the tribe settled around the school. They've known since 1990 that their island was being eroded into the sea because the protection of winter ice was coming later and leaving earlier each year, exposing the island to violent storms. The village has sued big business under public nuisance laws to take responsibility for the relocation. The suit is awaiting a Supreme Court decision. The majority of the book deals with intertwined history. The first portion deals with the history of organizations created and funded by big business to deny scientific conclusions by chanting the mantra "there is doubt," the war cry of the professional denier, whether it's the hazards of smoking, CFCs in the atmosphere, lead in paint, or global warming. Huge amounts of money have gone into creating doubt in the mind of the public and in the minds of the courts. The next portion of the book deals with the history of the rise of big oil and its influence on judicial decisions which make accomplishing anything on behalf of the common citizen, such as relocating a Native Alaskan village, virtually impossible. Because big oil employs professional deniers to prevent governmental decision, the whole world has ground to a halt concerning carbon dioxide reduction in the atmosphere, the cause of Kivalina's plight. The tale would not be incomplete without a chapter on government and big oil's treatment of Native Alaskans to give big oil access to their oil-rich lands. It's a well written, thoughtful and thought-provoking series of intertwined histories. It's sad that the private citizen has so little with which to fight the money and influence of big business, that the history of Kivalina may be dependent on a Supreme Court decision at this point, and that most of us, after reading the book, will never hear of Kivalina again.

Christine Shearer has written one of the most important books on the impacts of climate change that is out there today. Sometimes the science can be complicated and deter some readers. This book gets right to truth of how real people are impacted by the changes in climate that we are all seeing today. Those who deny climate change do so out of fear, ignorance or greed. I would recommend they read this book and put themselves in the shoes of the Kivalina people. Afterall, they may find themselves in similar shoes before they know it.

My Dad bought this book for me since I am named after the village , "This story is a tragedy, I have always been drawn to the Village and its history so I found it a very interesting read. I find it very sad whats happening to What I call MY Village.

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