

Researcher: Inuit culture in peril

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Global warming could doom the hunting and fishing culture of the Inuit in Canada, an expert on the Arctic region says.

Franklyn Griffiths, a retired University of Toronto political science professor with expertise on Arctic and Russian matters, told members of Parliament Thursday his interviews of Inuit hunters and elders revealed a significant minority have serious concerns about climate change, CanWest News Service reported Friday.

"There's a real worry that the physical basis for the culture will be wiped out," Griffiths said. "Hunting will become the equivalent of picnics. It's all over, that way. No longer are they Inuit.

While a majority of Inuit say they believe they would adapt, he said he worries about their future.

"There's a cultural genocide implied. That is my phrase, not something they'd use.

"I think there is a real risk of Inuit culture being wiped out," he said, "but when and how fast that happens, I don't really know."

New projections portend a much-faster warming trend. Louis Fortier, scientific director of the Canadian research network ArcticNet, said the Arctic Ocean could be ice-free in summertime as soon as 2010 or 2015, instead of 2050 predicted earlier under worst-case scenarios.

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