



# Social Construction of a Polar Bear Population “Crash” and the Importance of Recognizing Indigenous Knowledge Systems



PRESENTATION BY **Dr. Brenda Parlee**

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There is growing public concern about the impacts of climate change on Arctic ecosystems and the drastic implications predicted for polar bears. Some scientists warn that world's polar bear populations could decline by over two-thirds by the year 2050. This “polar bear crisis” has captured public imagination and has driven unprecedented dialogue and action on climate change. However, the present-day “polar bear crisis” is one that has been socially constructed at a global scale to the dis-benefit of northern Indigenous peoples who have many generations of knowledge and lived experience of bears. The global population of polar bears, which has been estimated between 22000 and 31000 animals, is in fact the highest it has ever been in sixty years of scientific research. Indigenous Knowledge holders across the Canadian north agree they are not seeing declines in bears and have much more evidence to suggest bear sub-populations are stable if not increasing, particularly in the Beaufort region. Guided by concerns and research carried out over many years by the Inuvialuit Game Council, this presentation reflects on the disjuncture between Traditional Knowledge and science, and the associated tensions between knowledge and power – specifically whose knowledge is being used in the governance of arctic ecosystems.

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**TUESDAY,  
JANUARY 29 @ 3:30PM**

**45 LODGE ST. (UPPER LEVEL)  
\* FORMER GREEK CHURCH  
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY**