"If Oceans Could Speak"

Episode 8 Transcript
Dr Victoria Qutuuq Buschman: Arctic indigenous knowledge for Arctic conservation

[00:00:00] **Victoria:** My belief is that in conservation of both lands and waters, there are ways to approach conservation ethically and responsibly. So culturally relevant, fully knowledge-based based, so incorporating not just research and science, but also indigenous knowledge. There are ways to do conservation really well.

[00:00:21] **Jen:** Hello, and welcome to another episode of "If Oceans Could Speak", the podcast that listens to the oceans through the personal stories of those who share their life with the sea around them. As always Stefan and I are going to be chatting to the people behind these unique stories in the hope that our conversations, not only intrigue, but inspire you to reflect upon your own individual connection to the ocean.

[00:00:44] After a very busy week in Glasgow at the COP26 summit, we are back and have another really special and incredibly valuable episode to share with you.

[00:00:54] **Stefan:** In this episode, we will be focusing on perspectives from the Arctic Ocean and we're delighted to have Victoria Qutuuq Bushman with us today. Victoria comes from Iñupiaq Inuit community in Alaska, and she's working as a post-doctoral researcher, jointly staffed at the international Arctic Research Center in Fairbanks, Alaska, and at the Queensland Institute of Natural Resources in Nuuk, Greenland, where she currently lives.

[00:01:17] Victoria works across the Arctic in education and with a number of Arctic councils and committees to challenge the colonial legacy of conservation and to promote partnerships with indigenous communities, knowledge and governance to develop ethically conscious, culturally relevant and fully knowledge based conservation efforts in the Arctic. Victoria is also very close to our own initiative as a founding member of the EU for Arctic Youth4Ocean forum. Welcome to "If Oceans Could Speak"!

[00:01:47] **Victoria:** Thanks very much. Good morning. Really glad to be here with you. And it's very nice to meet you all.

[00:01:53] **Stefan:** Victoria, you grew up between Utqiaġvik in Alaska and Northern California between the Redwood forests and the polar ocean. What's it like growing up north and along the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

[00:02:08] **Victoria:** Yeah, thanks. So I grew up in a small community in Northern Alaska called Utqiaġvik. It's a small town of only maybe four and a half thousand people, but it is the largest town in our region. Our region is approximately the size of the UK, but while the UK has 66 million, we have 10,000 people. So, while our community is very close to the ocean, it is along this gravel spit. And for the most part, this community has been in this particular area for the last few thousand years. It's not the longest continuous besettled town in all of Alaska. There's another one that is a little bit older. But people have been living in this region of Northern Alaska, 71 degrees north, for thousands of years.

[00:02:56] My people are definitely ocean people. So we have sea ice eight to nine, sometimes even ten months of the year. And this relationship with the ocean completely structures the way that our year occurs. All of our societal organizing all of our community organizing is around sort of what is happening on the ocean at a particular time.

[00:03:23] For example, I also come from the largest Bowhead whaling community in the world. So Utqiaġvik is the largest bowhead whaling community. And this is done in very sustainable ways, traditional ways, we had by sealskin boats called Umiak and there's no motor, it's very traditional. We put a bunch of people in the boat and you paddle out and you chase the whales for the most part.

[00:03:49] And we only get a few a year. There's a very strict quota system, is in the US, but my childhood and our entire livelihoods are connected to this particular activity, the whaling seasons. And we have no - you cannot sell the meat for money. So it's only community-based, it's given out to the community after the whale has been caught and there's a big celebration.

[00:04:16] So a lot of our life like our livelihoods have been structured around this particular interaction with, with wildlife, particularly bowhead whales in our particular community.

[00:04:30] **Jen:** Thank you for sharing that. I think that's so fascinating and it's just so different from any other way of life that I could have imagined. And it's so clear that this connection to the Arctic ocean was instilled in you from such an early age. And I'm wondering now that you're older and working and traveling a lot, how do you manage to keep this connection to the Arctic alive? Is it difficult or is it something that's just part of you that you don't really even need to question it?

[00:04:57] **Victoria:** That's a really good question. The truth is I have always lived on the coast no matter where I have gone. I have always chosen to live on the coastline. You know, I live in Nuuk in Greenland and one of the things that makes my connection to the ocean quite easy and simple is that, you know, even though I'm a research scientist and many research scientists choose to live in lower latitudes, I've made the decision to live full-time in the Arctic as a part of what I think is, for me, the ethical thing to do is to work in the communities that I, that I do research with. So, and of course, like, I am Inuit. So it's very natural and normal for me to live in another community, like in Greenland, um, with my own people. And it's very comfortable for me. So the truth is that I'm, I'm not often very far from the ocean to begin with, even when I travel for work and go to conferences. Like, you know, you go to Iceland to Reykjavik or you go to Norway to Tromsø, and you're still, you're still on the water. I think the Arctic Ocean is so central to a lot of, kind of human livelihoods in the north. People are so connected to the north and to the ocean.

[00:06:13] **Stefan:** You work with a focus on fighting for indigenous perspectives to be included, to be heard, and for the rights of indigenous communities to wildlife management and for conservation in the Arctic. At what point in your life did your connection between your heritage and the environment become really a true passion? And why did you decide to do exactly that kind of work?

[00:06:42] **Victoria:** Thanks. So I have kind of a long way to explain this. I'm currently in the very long process of writing a book called "Resisting Melt" that talks about why sort of indigenous perspectives, particularly to conservation are so important. And it weaves in a little bit my own trajectory and experiences of

why I became the first Iñupiaq doctor of conservation biology. This has to do a lot with the history of indigenous communities in the Arctic and the history of the kinds of wildlife research and conservation initiatives that have always taken place here in the Arctic. Back in the 1970s, there was a bowhead study, a bowhead whale study to try and reach a population estimate for the Pacific population. And this bowhead study made some major mistakes that shut down, well, essentially the scientists came to the conclusion that the population was in severe decline, and this would be an important place for conservation activities to occur.

[00:07:52] But the community, my community of Utqiaġvik recognized that the science wasn't saying what they were experiencing. And so they concluded that the bowhead whale study was erroneous and needed to be fixed. In the period of time between this study coming out in the community, getting together to organize, the US government had closed down the hunting of bowhead whales for the north slope of Alaska.

[00:08:22] And this directly affected a lot of people's livelihoods and food security, which is basically, you know, we live in such far Northern communities that we don't have the same access to food conveniences that other people do, even though we belong to the US, right? So, this was a very difficult time for our community and the community members, including Eben Hopson, who is the founder of the Inuit Circumpolar Council came together because they wanted to explore this model with the scientists.

[00:08:55] So when the scientists came up to have these conversations, they were able, the community members were able to identify that they were looking in the wrong places. They were sampling in the wrong places. So, you know, research is not invaluable. It's something that we as scientists always have to remember.

[00:09:12] And no matter how much you look for a species in a particular place, if they're not there, you're not going to find them. So the community members were able to show them where their preferred habitat was for this particular time of the year. And the population estimate was drastically increased with the addition of indigenous knowledge.

[00:09:32] So our community in Alaska is one of the first communities with, like, a major success story about how conservation was being practiced in a way that maybe was inethical and inequitable, but it was able to be turned around and that a lot of respect for, you know, the community and for the indigenous knowledge, that was there to be a part of research. And to be a part of conservation planning became a really a big part of, sort of the trajectory of how Arctic science is done, how conservation is done and how communities are a part of these activities and these processes. So that, that was back in the 1970s. But when I was growing up in the, in the 90s. You know, we still have a lot of issues around conservation, particularly in the US and conservation that is sometimes practiced in ways that are harmful to the communities that have to cope with those, those measures.

[00:10:26] And are often in my eyes unnecessarily difficult for communities, like, my belief is that in conservation of both, you know, lands and waters, there are ways to approach conservation ethically and responsibly, so culturally relevant, fully knowledge based, so incorporating not just research and science, but also indigenous knowledge. There are ways to do conservation really well. And so growing up with my experience of these stories and this particular challenges, you know, connected to bowhead whales that are, you know, a species of conservation interest, but also of course, like a source of food for small communities in the north.

[00:11:07] My, my whole life, I have known that I wanted to become a conservation biologist because I wanted to know how other people thought about these things and how we can think about them in a way that works better for our communities.

[00:11:21] **Jen:** Thanks. That's amazing. And actually you just answered our next question, which was going to be, could you give an example of how traditional knowledge has helped influence science or policy in the Arctic and the bowhead example that you've just gave has really showcased how there is this whole knowledge base that should be tapped into, and I can absolutely understand why you would want to put this to the forefront and, yeah, to help conservation. So I was wondering in your own words, can you pinpoint exactly what it is about the traditional knowledge systems that you have grew up with and know so well? What is it about them that they are so valuable to conservation?

[00:12:03] **Victoria:** Thank you. This is a really important question, but it's also a very complicated question and I want to make sure that I get to all of those parts because there was a lot, there was a lot in that question.

[00:12:16] First of all, I would like to say that as, as a research scientist, I very much respect indigenous knowledge and the unique contributions of indigenous knowledge and recognize that indigenous knowledge is not something that can be integrated into science. There are things that can be partnered and can be learned from each other, but they are very independent, different ways of knowing about the environment and about the world. I prefer to use the term indigenous knowledge. There's lots of other terms that are used as well. Traditional ecological knowledge, traditional knowledge, local knowledge, and all of these to me have slight differences that are worth exploring, but maybe not, maybe not in this particular podcast. But, indigenous knowledge, I think, is a very good term because it recognizes that our knowledge belongs to a system of knowing that is not very Western. So it can be difficult to try and fit those two together. It's very independent, but rather than calling it traditional knowledge, which kind of gives this impression that it is something only relevant to the past or only relevant to particular cultural activities, indigenous knowledge helps us to recognize that our knowledge systems are living and breathing way of knowing, you know, they're very adaptable. We are constantly including new information, new technologies. So our knowledge system is very flexible as well. And it's important that it be recognized that way, I think, in science, because having that respect for what indigenous knowledge is and what it can do really helps us to improve our conservation targets and outcomes. And I feel like in order to engage with indigenous knowledge, we have to have that respect for it. I also grew up hunting and not so much fishing actually, but hunting and I, I do to some extent have that indigenous knowledge with me, but I am not like the, I am not the most knowledgeable, of course, not at all a knowledge holder. And there are many indigenous knowledge holders who are invaluable: elders, or even actually some young folks are quite important, indigenous knowledge holders in our communities.

[00:14:36] So that's to the point of what is indigenous knowledge, right? How do we engage with it? This is actually a very important discussion that is occurring actually in the UNFCCC right now there's a few working groups in CBD [*Convention on Biological Diversity*], Arctic Council. There are a lot of international organizations that are trying to grapple with this exact point.

[00:15:01] Like, indigenous knowledge is very much, you know, I say that it is both place-based but also landscape scale. So meaning that it is very community-based. So a lot of the particular knowledge and observations are really, really rich at the very local level. But at the landscape level, there are also indigenous knowledge also informing about like ecosystem processes at a broader scale.

[00:15:29] So these two things are in focus. But at the international level, we're talking about extremely, we're talking about everything, right? The entire, the entire Northern hemisphere. So one thing is that the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform of the UNFCCC has been running indigenous knowledge webinars that talk specifically about how indigenous knowledge is informative for climate change adaptation, but also how to engage with indigenous knowledge in ethical and equitable ways. So there are a series of webinars out there that you can go and listen to. And I've been a part of some of those, but in short, I think that the important point is that indigenous knowledge really does have a role in shaping, you know, research.

[00:16:19] It has a role in shaping science. It has a role in shaping policy and decision-making, and not just at the local level, but also at the international level. And one of the difficulties is figuring out, like, how do we take all of these different pieces and components at different scales and make it work.

[00:16:37] But I would say that in my particular experience it does work. It can be a little bit difficult to explain exactly how that is, but it does. For example, I mean, Arctic Council, there is a project called salmon peoples of the Arctic. And this includes salmon fishers from Alaska, from Canada, from Sápmi in Northern Scandinavia, and they're able to bring together their indigenous knowledges of ecosystem change and population dynamics and the challenges and drivers of climate change and possible adaptation strategies as a part of that project.

[00:17:16] And it is something where different peoples can come together and put that information together and have it be cohesive and valuable for decision making at the international level. Of course this is like a ongoing project and like I'm not involved in it at all, but I've been really starting to get excited about where this project can go, because it's a really good example of how indigenous knowledge and science are really helping to meet in the middle and to really influence international policy in these big, important spaces.

[00:17:49] **Stefan:** Thanks a lot. I think it's really illustrative nice to see how indigenous knowledge, how this can really inform about the Arctic. And unfortunately, despite the relevance of indigenous knowledge, indigenous communities are rarely at the forefront of science, conservation, and policy in their own lands. What do you think why that is the case?

[00:18:12] **Victoria:** Thank you. This is a, this is a really important question about sort of the ethics of a lot of decision making processes in the Arctic right now. One of the reasons I think this is in place is, or this is the case is that we are the Arctic countries. There are eight of us, and we're all extremely developed countries with a lot of money and a lot of power, a lot of capability to do the things and make the change that we think are important.

[00:18:41] And indigenous communities are really a very, very, very small percentage of these overall, the overall makeup of these particular countries. And I think that historically it's been very easy to conduct policy and decision-making processes within our major city centers in the capitals that are very far removed from the realities of a lot of communities that are up in the north.

[00:19:05] For example, myself included, growing up in Utqiaġvik, I had an extremely different, I have an extremely different life experience than the average American. And it's a rare experience to some extent, right? So historically it has made sense - not, I don't want to say it has made sense, but it's understandable that, you know, we've sort of been on the fringe, but now that the Arctic is like a central and hot topic, as we talk about climate changes, we talk about sort of globalization.

[00:19:36] The Arctic is really becoming a place that everybody wants a skin in the game. And for the most part, it is at least in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and lots of Russia, almost the only communities that are sitting in the north are indigenous communities. It's not so much the case in Sápmi, but if people want to be working here doing research here, making decisions here, there has become a realization that they have to work with us even just logistically like to do research in the Arctic, you have to come to our communities, you have to spend some specific amount of time here. Most researchers don't want to live in the Arctic in the winter. So what do you do for this whole other season of sampling that we need, right? And part of the reason I've been talking so much about indigenous knowledge as being important is because the truth is, as a research scientist, I can tell you that a lot of the Arctic is still quite data

deficient. We are still learning things about basic biology every year, in part, because people who want to do research come up here in the summertime because it's really nice in the summer. And that's when they do their sampling and their data collection, and then we're kind of in the dark about a lot of other stuff. So indigenous communities are increasingly playing a role, not only in doing the data collection, doing the research, providing the indigenous knowledge, but also recognition for the fact that you can put policies into place, but if they don't work for our communities, we will go around them.

[00:21:03] And we are very remote. There's very little enforcement in the north. I'm not saying that there should be more enforcement. What I'm saying is that communities should really be the drivers of a lot of these policies and a lot of these decision making processes. For example, you know, we still get a lot of research projects in the Arctic that are interesting and valid directions for science, but they're not always that important to indigenous communities. They're not necessarily helpful to indigenous communities. And there is a big movement right now, I think, in at least Alaska and Canada, to be more attentive to what the community needs are because there are so many problems in the world right now with climate change, with globalization, with industry, all kinds of things that all you have to do is pick one problem that makes an impact on a community.

[00:22:00] It's not - in my eyes - it's not enough to just do science anymore. Like we have a lot of things to tackle as a global community. So part of this is also that, you know, indigenous communities are really starting to help shape these research processes, these policy processes, these decision making processes. And I think that is evident in the fact that it's not, we're trying to move past sort of token participation, like ensuring that you have one indigenous person on a management board or in a council or at an Arctic Council project, right? And really be more representative and inclusive of indigenous peoples in a more meaningful way in all of these processes. So I do see a big change in how indigenous communities are engaged. And I do hope that the trajectory of this is going to be, you know, not only beneficial to indigenous communities, but it's going to help us get to better policy, better research, better decision-making in the long run.

[00:22:57] **Stefan:** When you mentioned indigenous communities being more engaged, of course, the big challenge in the Arctic is climate change. Can you

tell us a bit about how your own community has been affected by climate change already today?

[00:23:13] **Victoria:** Oh, yeah. Well, so this is an interesting, like, the conversations of climate change are extremely interesting. For one, I think we've been left out of these conversations of climate change for a long time, simply because we don't use the same language around climate change.

[00:23:30] We talk about changes in the environment and changes in wildlife and things like this without using sort of the broad vocabulary that we use in international spaces, in national spaces. And I think that's just an important recognition because I think if you were to look up my hometown, it would be very rare for you to find a community member speaking particularly about climate change.

[00:23:57] But if you listen to how they talk and what they're talking about, they're talking about exactly this issue, right? And the way that it comes up the most in not just my hometown, but all across sort of Inuit homelands is changes to wildlife populations and this being a very serious consideration for our communities who are concerned about food security, but also cultural practice, and,, you know, how are young people going to learn specific things? If the species that we have always relied on are just not here anymore, or if they've traveled north or if the population is in decline. Specifically, I'm thinking about that, as an aside, the joy of my job is often that I get to work with some of the more controversial species, right?

[00:24:48] So the species that the public is very interested in and are of conservation interests, but are of course also species that indigenous communities hunt sustainably and also are engaged in a lot of the decision-making processes for. One thing that I would say is getting difficult, I would like to highlight at least, in Canada is a lot of communities have historically and still do hunt polar bears. It's a part of our livelihoods. People eat polar bears. And, climate change is really driving a lot of changes in population dynamics in polar bear subpopulations. So there are 19 polar bear populations in the world, and some of them are in quite bad decline. Actually the population of the west coast of Greenland is not doing very well.

[00:25:37] This is also historical since colonizations from Denmark, but there's actually a pretty big increase of polar bear populations in Canada. And this is, it seems like this is a very positive thing, right? But what we're hearing from a lot of the indigenous communities is that the polar bear population is much higher than in anybody's living memory, or even like an oral history.

[00:26:03] We don't have this quite this high occurrence of polar bears and a lot of, I think Canadian Inuit, have been making the argument that they would like to increase the quotas to hunt polar bears because the population is quite high. And as a conservation biologist, I think that this is actually a good idea, you know, depending on which of the subpopulations they're talking about, it's not one management regime fits all type situation, but, you know, I think this is a very valid thing to want to pursue, but I find also that under climate change we have created these particular narratives about what is climate change and what are the threats and how should we engage in it? And a lot of people, I think, in the public eye are very concerned about polar bear populations and the thought of hunting, polar bears is very uncomfortable for people. And I would like to encourage that we just give a little bit of thought to, you know, what is sustainability? Like, do we have faith in the management practices that are put in place by our major countries? Do we have faith in sort of the scientists who are doing the research and also saying, yes, the population is quite high. I would like to challenge us as a global community to change how we think about the Arctic and the narrative that is here, because we are still practicing conservation, we are still pushing for conservation. In fact, a lot of indigenous communities are really pushing for conservation, you know, outside and independent of other government processes. But there are a lot of indigenous-led initiatives right now, you know, we'll have another probably 10, close to 10 protected areas in the Arctic by the end of this decade. And I think that it is worth listening to communities when they say something like "I would like to increase the quota on polar bears in a particular population, because it's very high", even though it is very uncomfortable for us to think about as a global community who might not have very much experience with what it is to live in the Arctic and have maybe never thought that people ate polar bears or have never engaged with that kind of daily occurrence for indigenous peoples.

[00:28:17] **Jen:** Yeah, that's a really interesting point. And I really like how you pick up on different terminologies that we use, the example of indigenous knowledge and with climate change. And this relates to the idea of ocean literacy using the right words is really important to be able to accurately

translate what we mean to each other and to understand the experiences that are each of us are living through, and I guess this brings us on to education more generally because you've been involved in the Youth4Ocean forum. And I wondered why do you think these initiatives are important? And have you seen a lot more Arctic youth become engaged in conservation, or want to know more about ocean issues?

[00:28:59] **Victoria:** Yeah, this is a great question. I think a lot of these big international, or, you know, at least regionally, very international forums and you know, non-governmental organizations and even some government activities are very important for bringing together people who otherwise wouldn't necessarily have a strong understanding of a particular place.

[00:29:26] And like I've said, the Arctic is becoming so "everybody wants to be here". Literally, countries who are very far away from us want to be here. So I'm very supportive of people becoming more knowledgeable about the Arctic, about the landscapes, about the particular environmental processes, about the people, about the cultures and the languages.

[00:29:49] Like these are all, I think, important things to be aware of if we're going to be having very public global discussions about the future of the Arctic. We need to be quite well-informed. And I think they Youth4Ocean forum is trying to really get us there. Of course there is the Arctic basin subsection of that organization that I was specifically speaking to.

[00:30:12] Yeah. If we're going to be tackling these big international issues, we need to be knowledgeable about what it is that we are tackling. And I think it has been historically very easy for us to have a very filtered idea and filtered narrative about, you know, what is the ocean? And what is the Arctic and why is it important? And sort of one perspective or two perspectives really dominating that discussion.

[00:30:38] And I think that we're coming into a period of time where we're finally able to have very nuanced discussions and nuanced understandings of the particular needs, priorities challenges, barriers that, you know, not only are we facing in the Arctic, but as global societies. How do we come together and tackle some of these issues when we are coming from very different places?

[00:31:01] And these forums are really important in ensuring that we have a space to be able to do that. And not only a space to be able to come together in my mind, it really is the space to change dominant narratives, to ensure that we are capturing what communities need and what communities know about particular topics, for example, in the Youth4Ocean forum, we're also talking about small fishing communities in different parts of Europe who have very different lived experiences than I do, but would have very similar understandings and desires for sustainable sources of food and income and the ability to have a high quality of life.

[00:31:40] So we are all, I think, moving towards the same targets, we're all wanting the same things. We just have a possibly have very different ways of speaking about these. And so we need to ensure that, you know, we do have these spaces to come together and to talk things through and to discuss why particular issues are issues. And when we think that maybe this climate change adaptation or this conservation strategy seems great, but here are some downsides that we should seriously consider as we move forward, this is incredibly important.

[00:32:18] **Stefan:** Thanks, and your own research is very diverse and your own work is now being recognized more and more also in the policy sphere. What's the next step for you? How do you plan to keep sharing your work and the important message that we've heard from you today?

[00:32:34] **Victoria:** Thank you. Yeah, well, I've got some big plans. I'm sitting here in my postdoc right now, and I'm like putting together a few ideas for some new research proposals, but you know, I'm not interested just in doing good research, of course, doing good research is very important to me, but I'm also interested in advising, you know, science and policy processes. And so that's why I'm engaged in certain small UN things or small Arctic Council things, little bits here and there because I also want to be in practice. I want to do good work for our communities and to push for what I believe in my professional opinion are the correct things to be pursuing and to be doing.

[00:33:21] But in terms of the research that I'm interested in doing actually, I've been really interested in OECMs, other effective area-based conservation measures. These are a discussion that is happening in the UNFCCC and the CBD, the convention on biological diversity about what places, particularly my

interest in the Arctic, are not protected areas, but are serving the same function are providing the same conservation outcomes.

[00:33:52] And this is something that I'm really interested in exploring here in the Arctic, because we do have quite a few examples of indigenous type OECMS. Processes and management activities that are done independent of a broader government that I think deserve some recognition at the international level, that there are spaces here in the Arctic that are fully managed by communities that serve the same function as these big, larger protected areas.

[00:34:19] And internationally, there's a big push to recognize OECMs as we reach our 30 by 30 target [*30% of protected areas by 2030*]. So I'm interested in that, but I'm also interested in indigenous-led conservation and what those processes are like. So, I have been briefly formerly involved in a protected area called "Pikialasorsuaq", which is the first bilateral indigenous-led conservation area in the world.

[00:34:44] And this is between Canada and Greenland. It's name in English is the "North Water Polynya". But this is a particular example that I am interested in exploring more how these initiatives come to be. And sort of what are the processes and what are the outcomes of these indigenous led initiatives? There's another one here also in Greenland called "Aasivissuit – Nipisat" that I was in, it's a UNESCO World Heritage Site that I was in this summer that was really, it's really an incredible space. So there are lots of protected areas in the Arctic that nobody has ever heard of. And they're worth highlighting and showcasing that they're doing really good work. And this is something that I think should be brought to the global stage. And that's what I hoping to be doing in the next few years.

[00:35:30] **Jen:** They all sound really valuable, really important. So we are recording this on the eve of COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, where hugely important discussions will take place that will help decide the future path of our global climate. Do these events instill hope in you for the Arctic, or if not, what else makes you hopeful for its future?

[00:35:52] **Victoria:** Yes, so COP26 is coming up. I'm leaving on Saturday. It will be really exciting. I'm going as a delegate to the Inuit Circumpolar Council to a bunch of their activities that are happening. During COP, I feel hopeful that

these are those places and opportunities that we can start to have very nuanced discussions and start to change those narratives about what the Arctic is. and, you know, what are the important considerations for working up here in the north. And, you know, at a global level, I think that organizing around COP is very important. I think it's also important to recognize, you know, none of the countries in the world have yet met their targets under the Paris Accord. So that's going to be a little bit tricky for us to chat about, but I think there are still bright spots and it would be, it's going to be really great to come together and discuss what those bright spots are and how we want to organize in the upcoming decade. And I'm really looking forward to these conversations.

[00:37:06] It will be my first COP. So, I'd be happy to report back afterwards how it goes, but we'll definitely, I'm definitely looking forward to, to seeing what kinds of conversations we can have and what kind of real change we can work towards. And you know, what kind of organizing is happening in other parts of the world as well, because the Arctic is one, just one region of many regions that are struggling with climate change. And I'm looking forward to seeing what we can learn from each other.

[00:37:38] **Jen:** I can say on behalf of everyone, we would love to have your thoughts back after COP, that would be great.

[00:37:47] **Stefan:** Absolutely. Finally, one thing when we usually end the episodes of "If Oceans Could Speak" with, is that we ask our guests, if there's one thought, one idea, one important message about the Arctic ocean that you'd like to share with our listeners, what would that be?

[00:38:07] **Victoria:** I guess the thing that I would like to impart now, as I'm leaving, is that the Arctic Ocean is extremely important to our indigenous communities, but it is also so connected and so interrelated to so many other important processes to other important communities. Like it is, the way that we are connected to everyone else in the world, any other small fishing community who might be going through similar experiences, we are, you know, on the other side of the world, we are connected by the ocean and by, you know, the populations of different species that are moving through it. And, you know, I think that there is actually a lot of hope when I reflect on how interrelated all of these processes are. And like there's no way out of it. We all have to focus on these issues, right? We all are going to be involved at some point, one way or another, and figuring out what we're going to do with our oceans, whether that's

from an environmental perspective or an industry perspective, or, you know, a global economic perspective.

[00:39:13] Like we all give some attention to the ocean either directly or indirectly. And I find that very comforting.

[00:39:24] **Jen:** Thank you so much, Victoria, for speaking with us and for imparting your wisdom and your knowledge and your thoughts and feelings so openly and so clearly. It's been such a pleasure to have you on our show.

[00:39:35] Thanks again - all the best for Glasgow next week.

[00:39:39] **Victoria:** Thank you very much.

[00:39:41] **Jen:** Victoria has a website, "victoriabushman.com", where she shares regular blogs of her experiences with Northern communities and her conservation work. Do make sure to check it out and the link to the page is on today's blurp. If you liked this episode, please leave us a rating on whichever listening platform you're using.

[00:39:59] And, if you would like to share your own notion stories, connect with us using the hashtag #IfOceansCouldSpeak. This podcast was brought to you by members of the EU4Ocean initiative and was made by the "If Oceans Could Speak" production team, led by Penny Clarke, co-organized by Arne Riedel and Anna Saito, and presented by Stefan Kirchner and me, Jen Freer. From all of us: Thank you for listening!