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## AAG Annual Meeting

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**Abstract Title:**

*Learning from Indigenous science: I-Kiribati knowledge, awareness, and adaptation to environmental change*

**is part of the Paper Session:**

[Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples I: Knowledge Systems and Adaptation](#)

**scheduled on Saturday, 4/13/2013 at 14:00 PM.**

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**Abstract:**

The Republic of Kiribati, a small island nation in the equatorial Pacific, is widely considered to be one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change and the effects of El-Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO). This interdisciplinary team employed a mixed-methods approach including ethnographic interviews, historical documentation, monitoring of coastal dynamics, and climate modeling to examine environmental change on two of the nation's atolls, the densely populated capital, Tarawa, and a sparsely populated outer island, Aranuka. Semi-structured interviews with government officials and members of local communities provided insight into how the inhabitants use Indigenous ecological knowledge to understand, respond, and adapt to environmental change on the islands, including severe drought, coastal erosion, decreased quality of fresh water, and diminished coconut harvests. Although several strategies for short and long term environmental adaptation have been implemented, our research showed that long-term strategies are focused primarily on preparing the younger generation for future migration as I-Kiribati youth are

increasingly encouraged to pursue opportunities for education, training, and employment overseas. Results from this study clearly illustrate the benefit of a mixed-methods approach that engages Indigenous ecological knowledge, not only for climate change research, but also in the development of adaptation strategies for ecologically vulnerable areas of the Pacific.

**Keywords:**

[Indigenous peoples](#), [climate change adaptation](#), [Indigenous ecological knowledge](#)

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