Abstract

This paper examines knowledge about beluga whales in Ulukhaktok, Canada. During summer 2014, hunters in Ulukhaktok landed 33 beluga whales. The hunt was unprecedented: beluga whales are only rarely encountered in local waters, and there is no tradition among Ulukhaktomiut for hunting beluga. Observations of the 2014 hunt and interviews subsequently conducted during 2015 suggest that, although Ulukhaktomiut claimed to lack facts about beluga whales, processual knowledge about beluga whales emerges materially in the application of the cell phone as a mechanism for organising hunts, in the experimentation with lances as killing implements, and through the development of practices for distributing meat and maktaq following a successful hunt. These processes, both material and social, highlight the complexities of constructing knowledge about a novel species while producing and negotiating community-building.
Beluga whales are also culturally important to indigenous communities in the Arctic. Like polar bears, the beluga depends on sea ice for its existence and can be directly impacted by climate change. Threats. In the Beaufort Sea of Canada, WWF supported a community-based monitoring program of beluga health. This project was a collaboration between Canada’s Department of Fisheries and Oceans and local communities. Improving Whale Protection. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is the body in charge of regulating whaling and addressing the vast number of other threats to whales, dolphins and porpoises in our oceans such as shipping, climate change, and bycatch. WWF is pushing to make the IWC more effective at reducing these threats that go beyond whaling. Ulukhaktok’s Patrick Akhiatak, front, prepares to field test the experimental harpoon-deployed tagging system. Captain John Noksana Sr. and Mate Joseph Felix Jr., both of Tuktoyaktuk, drive the boat. (Submitted by Shannon MacPhee/Fisheries and Oceans Canada). Researchers usually tag whales out of Kugmallit Bay and Hendrickson Island because it is easier to tag whales in shallow waters, Loseto said. But the new harpoon tag can open up the possibility of tagging whales in deeper waters and the ability to gather even more information, she said. “Could this technology
allow some of the outer communities to ask questions about which whales have gone here and why rather than all of the tagging efforts being focused out of this one region?" She asked. Inuvialuit traditional ecological knowledge of beluga whale (Delphinapterus leucas) under changing climatic conditions in Tuktoyaktuk, NT. D Waugh, T Pearce, SK Ostertag, V Pokiak, P Collings, LL Loseto. Arctic Science 4 (3), 242-258, 2018. 11. 2018. “We don't know anything about whales”: ecological knowledge and ways of knowing in Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories, Canada.1. P Collings, T Pearce, J Kann. Arctic Science 4 (3), 223-241, 2017. Technology, knowledge and beluga whales in Ulukhaktok, NT, Canada. P Collings. Hunter Gatherer Research 3 (4), 697-716, 2019. The beluga whale (/bɪˈluːɡə/) (Delphinapterus leucas) is an Arctic and sub-Arctic cetacean. It is one of two members of the family Monodontidae, along with the narwhal, and the only member of the genus Delphinapterus. It is also known as the white whale, as it is the only cetacean to regularly occur with this colour; the sea canary, due to its high-pitched calls; and the melonhead, though that more commonly refers to the melon-headed whale, which is an oceanic dolphin. Peter Collings Technology, knowledge and beluga whales in Ulukhaktok, NT, Canada, Hunter Gatherer Research 3, no.44 (Apr 2019): 697–715. https://doi.org/10.3828/hgr.2017.35. J. D. Ford, D. Clark, T. Pearce, L. Berrang-Ford, L. Copland, J. Dawson, M. New, S. L Harper Changing access to ice, land and water in Arctic communities, Nature Climate Change 9, no.44 (Mar 2019): 335–339.