

Wainwright captain takes second whale

By **BOB KOWELUK**

Tundra Times Reporter

Fredrick Ahmaogak, a Wainwright whaling captain, struck and landed his second whale Monday, May 18. Ahmaogak had struck and landed a whale two weeks ago.

Also two weeks ago, Barrow whaling crews had struck and landed a small bowhead whale, before the lead closed, forcing the whalers to stop hunting.

"The whalers got only one whale here," Loretta Adams, a Barrow resident said. "The whalers have not been hunting for a couple of weeks now, until the ice broke up today. And hopefully they get a whale.

"The lead was open this morning, maybe it opened sometimes during the night," she said.

Many of Barrow's whaling crews are at the open lead ready for the first opportunity to take the bowhead whales.

"I hope they get one whale today," Mrs. Adams said. "Or tomorrow." The first whale landed by Barrow was a small bowhead which took whalers only three hours to butcher. "That's all. We keep everything from the whale, except for the bones. It was so small for a bowhead."

Three boats were needed to tow the whale to shore. The whale was divided among the

whaling crews.

Weather for whaling was reported favorable with light winds and good weather. More crews are expected to join the crews already near the edge of the shore ice Tuesday afternoon. "It depends if the water's still open down there. When the ice moves towards the shore, crews haul out their boats from the ice edge towards the beach to wait. When the lead closes up,

everybody goes up to the beach to wait," Mrs. Adams said. "We are hoping to get more, maybe six more.

"Wainwright just got one whale yesterday (Monday). They got two of them now. It was Fredrick Ahmaogak's crew that got the whale. His crew got one whale in the second week of this month. I heard they got the whale at Icy Cape, between Point Lay and Wainwright."

Ray Dronenberg, a researcher for the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission said the whales arrived in the northern seas early this year. Counting of the bowhead whales was going along satisfactorily until the leads near shore closed two weeks ago forcing bowhead to swim farther offshore and putting an effective stop to the counts. Many more whale calves were counted this year according to Dronenberg.