

Eskimo Mayor of Barrow Sights Joash Tukle's Stranded Crew

The Eskimo mayor of Barrow, Wyman Panigeo, was the man who sighted whaler Joash Tukle and his crew. This was confirmed by Sam Taalak last week. Taalak is the manager of Barrow Utilities, Inc.

Joash Tukle's whaling crew had become stranded on the Arctic Ocean after harpooning the mammoth 70-ton whale. Tukle, along with Ben Itta's crew had begun to tow the great animal but after hours of pulling at a snail's pace ran out of gas.

Ben Itta then took his crew back to Barrow to go for help and managed to reach the big village with just enough gas in his inboard engine.

When the news spread that Tukle had caught a whale but was stranded, a plane flew out to pinpoint the crew but the pilot returned without locating the whalers.

Other planes joined the search but failed to see any trace of the whaling crew. News soon spread

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Joash Tukle . . .

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that Joash Tukle and his crew had vanished. Barrow people held an emergency meeting to plan the search for the missing whalers.

On the second day of the search, Wyman Panigeo, mayor of Barrow, went along with a Search and Rescue plane and sighted the stranded whalers some 35 miles east of the village.

The plane pinpointed the location, but subsequent searchers lost the whalers for a time. When they again found them, a plane guided a motorboat by dipping its wings and flying toward the direction of the whalers.

"They were actually trying to get back to Barrow," said Sam Taalak. "They had sewn their blankets together to make a sail and were doing alright but the wind died down—dead calm."

The stranded crew was in fine spirits when found.

"There was nothing wrong with them. They had plenty of food. The only thing wrong with those guys, they were anxious to get back to their wives and families. They had to leave their big whale—a monster 70-footer. Too bad. We lost a lot of muktuk."

It was first thought that the whale was about 60 tons but it was larger. The huge mammal measured around 70 feet long. It would have been one of the largest whales ever caught by Eskimo whalers.