

Sharing the Whale

BARROW--The first two bow-head whale catches of the fall season have been made by crews from Kaktovik. The catches were registered under the oversight authority of a new Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission formed August 29 by Eskimo whaling captains.

The first whale, taken September 29 by a crew captained by Nolan Solomon, was 55 feet long and weighed about 53 tons. The second, taken by the Herman Aishanna crew on October 2, was 22 feet long and weighed about 20 tons.

In a dramatic demonstration of the ancient Inupiat sharing cus-

tom, North Slope Borough Mayor Eben Hopson flew to Anaktuvuk Pass with a box of muktuk, fresh from the Aishanna kill. It was reportedly the first time in history that the inland Inupiat had been able to share a whale the same day it was caught.

The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission was formed to oversee and regulate subsistence whaling and to cooperate with the International Whaling Commission in the management and conservation of all species of Arctic whales. Seventy-two whaling captains from Gambell

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Whale . . .

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to Kaktovik took part in the commission's organizational meeting and tapped Arnold Brower, Sr. as their chairman.

The need for a local regulatory commission came about because of a ruling that the International Whaling Commission that directed an end to bowhead hunting, even by Eskimos. The ruling is widely thought to be based on inaccurate information compiled by the federal government. The United States has until October 21 to file an objection to the ruling, which would nullify the IWC action.

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