

Selawick lands first beluga

by Jim Benedetto

Tundra Times Editor

It was already late in the day on August 7 when Chester Ticket and his wife Myrna took their boat out to reach a good moose hunting area near their home in Selawick. Chester and Myrna were accompanied by Alan and Ella Ticket, in their own boat.

According to Myrna, the party had gone about 15 miles east of Selawick, drifting by the river, when Myrna suggested that they call it a day and pull the boats along the shore to have some tea. The members of the hunting party collected driftwood along the bank and made a fire.

As they relaxed, enjoying their hot tea, Ella Ticket remarked that she had seen something out beyond the sandbar where they had built their fire. The rest of the party strained their eyes to try to get a look at whatever it was that Ella had seen, but only a small part of it was visible above the waterline. Finally, after approximately 15-30 minutes, the mysterious creature emerged fully from the water, blowing a powerful spout of water high into the air.

"It's a beluga! It's a beluga!" cried Alan Ticket.

"No, it can't be a beluga, not in our river!" replied an in-

credulous Myrna. Nobody the Tickets knew had ever heard of a beluga in the Selawick River.

It was a beluga.

The small party decided it would be unwise to try to chase the beluga in their tiny boats; besides, they were short on fuel, and had none of the traditional gear for whaling.

They immediately tried to raise Ella's father on the CB radio. They managed to get one of their daughters on channel 20, who then telephoned several other people.

By the time the rest of the hunters arrived, it was too dark to try to pursue the whale. They spent the dark hours planning their strategy and loading their guns.

There were four boats in all by the time it began to get light at 5:30 that morning. Besides those of Chester and Alan Ticket, David Greist and Ralph Raymond, whaling captains both, had brought their boats, crews and gear.

Although they lost sight of it several times in the early morn-

ing light, the beluga always seemed to return to the spot where it had originally been spotted. At 6:18 that morning, they harpooned the whale. After attaching a float to the harpoon line so they would not lose the whale, they shot it.

David Greist and his crew were credited with the kill. The beluga was estimated to be about 14 feet long, and the men of the party soon had it butchered. Myrna and Ella did not help, though; the boots they wore were not suited to the work.

The party decided that there were too many people in Selawick (over 500), and too little whale meat to give each family a share, so they had a feast outside of David Greist's house. Somebody else had gotten a moose, so besides the beluga, there was moose meat and soup for all the people to eat. A fine time was had by all—or, almost all.

The Tickets—Chester and Myrna, Alan and Ella—were "real tired." They laid their heads down, "just for a little while" because they had been up all that night and day without sleep. And so, they all slept blissfully through the feast.