

# Inupiat take bowheads under quota

**Three villages  
take limit, Barrow  
over by one**

BY JEFFREY R. RICHARDSON

You'd think Alaska's Inupiat whalers would have enough excitement just chasing after bowheads. But this spring, for the first time in the centuries that bowhead have migrated to Arctic waters, the Inupiat have had hanging over their heads the possibility that if they took more whales than were allotted to them by the International Whaling Commission, they would become outlaws in the eyes of the "civilized" world.

## **One Crew Left**

In fact, as this issue of the Tundra Times goes to press, one Barrow whaling crew remains on the ice, determined to get a whale, despite Barrow's achievement of its allocation of three bowheads, out of an overall quota of 12. The crew has also declined to accept the advice of Barrow elders and the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission. The Commission, composed of whaling captains from St. Lawrence Island to Kaktovik, is dedicated to self-regulation of the traditional spring and fall bowhead hunts and was instrumental in persuading the International Whaling Commission to acknowledge the need for a subsistence hunt to the limited extent that it did so last December. The bowhead is alleged by some to be an endangered species.

Sunday, May 7, climaxed a tense week in which Barrow crews first met, then exceeded their three-whale quota. The whalers explained that two of the whales were of a different species than the bowhead. Although crews allegedly in violation were informed they would be prosecuted by Jim Brooks, head of the Juneau office of the National Marine Fisheries Service, a Sunday meeting with Brooks' boss, Dr. Richard Frank, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), resolved the problem of the two whales. Brooks is a former commis-

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Most of the village of Wainwright turns out to haul in and butcher a bowhead whale taken last week during the height of the annual spring hunt. For more photos of the hunt in Wainwright and Barrow, please turn to page 6.

# ● Spring bowhead hunt

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sioner of fish and game, serving under the Egan and Hammond administrations.

Jacob Adams, chairman of the Eskimo Whaling Commission, said the Barrow meeting with Frank "went real good."

## No Prosecution

"There'll be no prosecution because the federal people agreed to call the fourth whale an 'unintentional violation' because of the difference we had over the two species of whales," Adams told the Tundra Times in a telephone interview. Times sources attending the meeting said federal officials admitted they might be at fault for misunderstanding over the two-species issue because they failed to provide the whalers with certain specific information about the new quota, set by the IWC but enforced by American officials.

Although Barrow, the largest of nine Alaskan Eskimo whaling communities, was torn over a desire to continue the traditional hunt, a plea issued last Friday by Adams to come in off the ice so as not to upset Inupiat efforts to have the quota revised or lifted this year, prevailed and all but the one of Barrow's score of crews came home.

An observer at the meeting with Frank quoted him as saying "The fourth whale seems to me to be an honest dispute and we have now clarified it and prosecution would now be improbable."

## Renegotiation of Treaty

Adams told the Times Frank had committed himself to a renegotiation of the international treaty regulating the predominantly commercial catch of the world's whales to recognize the legitimate subsistence whaling needs of the Inupiat. Adams said the goal of such recognition would be "a more realistic quota" set by the International Whaling Commission. The Commission meets in London next month, the first anniversary of the first quota ever

set on Inupiat pursuit of the bowheads. Adams said the Inupiat would have three representatives seated on the American delegation to the meeting. They are Adams, Barrow Whaling Captain Arnold Brower, Sr. and North Slope Borough Mayor Eben Hopson. In addition, the entire Eskimo Whaling Commission will be seated as observers at the meeting.

Although Barrow whalers pressed Frank to reveal what would happen should another whale be captured, Frank declined to discuss the possibilities, saying instead that if another Barrow whale were taken, "this community will suffer for it and I will suffer for it." Frank was alluding to his futile efforts last December at the Tokyo meeting of the IWC to seek a more equitable quota for the Inupiat.

Adams indicated the Eskimo Whaling Commission might consider a jurisdictional suit against the IWC if favorable results are not obtained at the London meeting.

## Other Catches

Besides the Barrow catches, Savoonga and Gambell, on St. Lawrence Island, landed a whale apiece; Pt. Hope landed two, and Wainwright one, while Wales and Kivalina, each with a quota of one, must go without this year, unless they are permitted to participate in a fall hunt. Nuiqsut, east of Barrow at the mouth of the Colville River, surrendered its quota to Wales. This apparently leaves only the northeastern village of Kaktovik with the opportunity to chase the bowheads yet this spring.

In a significant sidelight to the drama of this spring's hunt, two representatives of the Greenpeace Foundation, an international group dedicated to preserving whales from extinction, came north to observe the hunt and left apparently convinced that subsistence hunting of bowheads constitutes a legitimate and environmentally

sound use of the resource.

Greenpeace rep Michael Bailey told a Tundra Times source:

"During our stay in Pt. Hope, we camped on the ice with the Eskimo whalers; it gave us insight into how difficult it is for these people to actually find, strike and kill a bowhead whale."

Bailey's companion, Elizabeth Tillbury, commented:

"From what we have observed, it appears that the people in Barrow use all parts of the whale and it is an integral part of their diet."

Both Greenpeacers returned to Portland, where they are reportedly working on position papers to be presented to the IWC.

## Hard Work

Another observer gave a thumbnail sketch of the effort involved in landing a whale after it has been struck. Wainwright's whale, taken by Felton Segevan's crew, was killed at 1 a.m., last Saturday morning, towed by four different crews to the edge of the ice, which was reached by 1 p.m. (Saturday). It then took another 12 hours to haul the 53 foot whale onto the ice, which broke under the whale three times before that work was done. Then the successful crew

had to butcher, which could have taken up to 10 additional hours.

The Wainwright whale delighted scientists when it was discovered to be carrying a fetus, measuring two feet in length. It was only the fourth bowhead fetus to be recovered intact by scientists, who admittedly know precious little about the species.

The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, supported by a

\$250,000 appropriation from the State of Alaska, took part this year in extensive population surveys of the bowheads, at least once saving the scientific day when federal officials were forced to break camp when the open lead in the ice where they were stationed unexpectedly closed up. While they broke camp, Eskimo counters kept tabs on the migrating whales and chalked up about 200 bowheads that otherwise would have been missed.