

TRAPPED WHITE WHALES NEAR INUVIK . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

sounds of fishing activity in the outer lakes.

Eskimo bush pilot, Tom Gordon, counted over 20 of the mammals trapped by freeze-up in early October. First, the whales kept open three holes about four hundred yards apart. Then, as the ice surface thickened, they allowed the smaller holes to freeze over and concentrated on one hole situated over 110 feet of water.

Inuvik Research Laboratory starr landed near the remaining breathing hole on November 10 and were the first of many curious camera-equipped visitors. Although no accurate count could be made, 19 whales were estimated to be present, three young and 16 adults.

One large male appeared to be 17 feet long. Several of the adult whales had extensive fungus-like growth on their skins.

RESEARCH

The research laboratory began an observation program on the trapped mammals gathering behavioural information although this material was collected from shore visits once or twice weekly.

The Arctic Research Laboratory did not believe the situation worth sending along a marine biologist.

Belugas are protected in Canada and may be taken by Indians, Eskimos, R.C.M.P. police and mixed blood residents only, or whites depending solely on the land for food. However, commercial hunter can be issued a sports hunting licence allowing the hunter two animals annually providing he does not kill both on the same day and takes no more than 20 pounds of meat or blubber from each kill.

He must also use native guide and equipment belonging to his guide. This latter regulation was devised to encourage the use of a sports hunting economy.

Whatever the Fisheries Board regulation, no hunter moved to take the whales, the nearest settlement having a hunting economy being Tukoyaktuk 55 miles to the north; the nearest settlement a reindeer station—25 miles due west.

HOLE SHRINKS

As an unseasonably mild winter set in, the hole size gradually decreased. Newspapers 'Outside' followed the decreasing hole dimensions as avidly as a baseball fan follows the National or American league standings. Questions were asked in the Canadian Parliament.

PERIODIC VIGIL

The research laboratory continued to make periodic visits to the breathing hole for varying periods. Observations became less frequent as the exposed lake ice funnelled the prevailing Arctic blasts from the north-west and as the hours of daylight decreased.

The breathing hole is situated 29 air miles from Inuvik. Visits were made on November 10, 11, 17, 23, December 2, 5, 9, 12, 14, and 23.

The research party on December 9 found the situation

critical. In the words of John Ostrick, in charge of the party, they found the hole shrunk to one and half feet by 17 feet and the whales jamming the space and "gasping for breath."

Man stepped in here. With ice chisels, they enlarged the hole, and when they left, the whales appeared "sportive." However, at this visit, only 12 whales could be distinguished.

The Edmonton Journal ran this story on the front page in a box linking it to a story from eastern Canada on an investigation into charges that commercial seal hunters in the eastern Arctic were skinning seal pups alive.

NEWS SCRAMBLE

While 'Outside' news media tripped over themselves after the story, little stir was created in the North beyond concern that the creatures would not last the winter, and if they were not to become an object of study for marine biologists, then they should be put out of their misery or taken by Eskimo hunters while the muktuk was still good.

Nothing happened. The whales continued to gulp three short breaths—then a complete change of air and off for another seven to ten minutes after fish.

"Crooked backs" are known to move through this lake in the dark period (about 32 days here) and they and trout are slow and sluggish in the black, cold water.

Undoubtedly, the whales were eating their way through a good fish lake and still were starving.

LIONS CLUB

On Sunday, December 18, the Inuvik Lions Club (about 50 members) moved to do something.

When the Club's decision was made known, 'Outside' contributions began coming in. Kids sent coppers and PR men sent promises of bucks to follow.

The Lions estimated that the whales would have about 200 days to go till break-up in Eskimo Lake. First priority was to ensure the breathing hole remained open and next came food.

In their initial enthusiasm, and ignorance, they let into the whales' breathing hole some 100 pounds of chopped up lamb and shredded whitefish. It was never determined whether or not the whales fed on or fled from the shower of bite-sized fish and meat.

Then came a flop in the 'Outside' papers, expected but hoped against. A reporter quoted Inuvik Research Laboratory manager, R.M. Hill, as describing the Lions 'Save the Whales' campaign as "Nonsense."

Hill denied he said 'nonsense' and pointed out his concern that the activity about the whale's breathing hole would so excite the creatures that the whales may be drowned through fear.

ESKIMO KNOWLEDGE

Shortly after this came the news that the whales were now seven, then five, then

three, which is the present count.

Eskimo residents of the delta who, as hunters know the ways, if not the whys of the beluga, said the critical factor here was the shortage of food.

Tom Kalinek said if the whales have food, it would not matter if the hole froze over or not as they would construct a bubble. Kenneth Peeloolook said it is possible the whales have created reservoirs of air under the ice by adding to large air bubbles they have built as does the muskrat knowing instinctively that air bubbles in contact with an ice surface purifies itself.

Owen Allen said they need food right away. He described them as physically in very poor shape with their insulating fat largely consumed. He suggested that while whales are not scavengers they might, out of necessity, pick off a fresh looking dead fish if suspended on a nylon threading. Once this learning step is passed, the survivors would probably like dead fish.

LIONS PERSEVERE

The Lions, using equipment donated by 'Outside' firms and flown free of charge to the site by Pacific Western Airlines and local charter companies, cut two additional holes in an attempt to enlarge the whales' foraging area.

No whales tried the new holes. Now the Lions are about setting fish nets at a distance from the breathing hole to try to take net-caught fish and drop them into the whales' hole.

While the prognosis for the whales' survival through to break-up is not encouraging, the Lions continue to labour and the world continues to look on.

No one can explain why the beluga problem has attracted so much attention, possibly an escape from the grinding reality of Vietnam.

TRAPPED BEFORE

Whales have been trapped before and survived—once many years ago recollected by oldtimers such as Roddi Kowikchuk and Felix Nuganiak of Tuktoyaktuk.

Those whales were caught in salt water, where ice was subject to tidal action, and were not found by hunters over the winter.

Eskimo hunters used to use the narrow entrance to Eskimo Lakes to their advantage in days past. If whales were seen at the foot of Liverpool Bay, hunters would attempt to drive them into the lake system.

Once the whales were inside, the men would stretch a line across the narrow mouth suspending from the line a number of strings to which bones were affixed. The acute hearing of the belugas picking up the sound of the bones striking the bottom and one another, would turn back from the barrier.

With the coming of winter, men and teams would seek out the breathing holes and take the whales while in prime condition.

In Educ. Committee

In his newsletter, Senator Ernest Gruening said that Flore Lekanof, Fairbanks, will represent the Alaska Federation of Native Associations of the first national All-Indian committee to oversee the quality and equality of educational opportunity for American Indians.

The formation of this per-

manent 16-man advisory group and Lekanof's appointment, were announced last week by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett.

The first official meeting of the National Indian Education Advisory Committee will be held early in February in Washington, D.C.

Social Services Plan . . .

(continued from page 1)

In order to do a good job, we should involve more Native people in the social services."

In order to do this he has proposed a new program for undergraduate social service education at the University of Alaska. This program would be geared to meet the needs of native students interested in some aspect of social service in Alaskan villages.

Dr. Van der Velden is an Associate Professor at the University of Alaska in the department of psychology and sociology. He designed the curriculum after an extensive study of the problems facing social welfare services in the state of Alaska.

According to his report 95% of our native students at the University of Alaska fail by the close of their freshman year, while at Ford Louis College in Colorado these students do very well.

Since more students have graduated from Ford Louis in the past ten years than from the University of Alaska in its entire history, he places the blame on the present curriculum of the University of Alaska saying that it does not meet the needs of Native people.

Dr. Van der Velden, assisted by Miss Zaye Chapin, an Assistant Professor at the university, outlined the following two undergraduate programs for social services education.

One program would consist of an interdepartmental major and minor with concentration in the social services courses offered and include both classroom teaching and field-instruction.

The second program would be a special project for undergraduate social service education involving in particular Indians and Eskimos. This would function on four levels.

1. The student would go to the University for the first year taking a light course load including one introductory course in the social services.

Two months of field observation and practice would follow at the completion of which he would be granted a certificate bearing the title Social Service Aide. He would then be given full employment in a social agency of his choice, paid accordingly, and given some college credits for the work.

2. After one year he would be able to return to the University for a second year of study and field work and given the title Social Service Assistant. A second year of full employment in a village would follow on a higher salary schedule.

3. After this year of ser-

vice he could return to the University to complete his junior and senior years with studies in the social services. Upon graduation he would receive his B.A. plus the title Social Service Associate.

4. After one or two years of satisfactory employment he might return to the university for the fourth level of work on a higher degree.

All through the program tutorial assistance and financial aide in the form of field employment would be offered.

Dr. Van der Velden is pushing for this program to begin in the fall of 1967 although there has been no official comment made by the University.

A questionnaire, formulated by the Council on Social Work Education, was sent to several prominent and professional persons concerned with the problem of personnel in the social services.

This questionnaire asked whether or not a school of social work leading to the degree Master of Social Welfare could be established in Alaska, and if so in which city.

The replies returned to date indicate that the demand for MSW's is not that great at the present time, but if such a school were to be established in the next few years it should be located in Anchorage.

It has generally been accepted that for many positions in the Social Services an MSW degree is not necessary, and many jobs could be carried out by persons having different varieties of training. Some of these could be advanced degrees, others less than bachelors. Dr. Van der Velden's proposed educational program would provide several levels of trained Social Service Workers.

Another problem he pointed out lies in recognizing what job areas exist and how these should be differentiated and specifically trained for.

The Alaska State Council on Social Service Education has proposed to Governor Hickel that a Governor's committee for Social Service Education be established.

His committee would consist of representatives from the Governor's office, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Divisions of Public Welfare, Youth and Adult Authority, Mental Health, and Public Health, Universities and Colleges, BIA, ASCAP, Alaska Federation of Native Associations, and other similar agencies.

The committee would function to coordinate funding for maximum utilization.