



IQ Implementation on the WHB PB: Arviat

Project 222-10-01

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Arviat, Nunavut

- ▶ Arviat has 2851 residents and still growing
- ▶ The first language is Inuktitut, and is known to be rich in culture and tradition
- ▶ A majority of Arviat residents rely on hunting and country food (caribou, seal, fish, beluga)
- ▶ In 2007, Western Hudson Bay polar bear total allowable harvesting was decreased from 38 to 0



Summary of the project:



- ▶ Arviat HTO hired an interviewer to interview elders and hunters of Arviat, Nunavut. The transcriber was also hired to type interviews bilingually; in English and Inuktitut.
- ▶ 21 Elders and hunters were interviewed. Each elder/hunter interviewed were asked to describe characteristics/behaviour, migratory and denning locations, known diet of polar bears, observations and any questions and concerns if any.
- ▶ Most of the people interviewed stated polar bears did not approach people and were rarely seen before the 1980s



Behaviour

- ▶ Polar bears avoided human contact before the 1980's
- ▶ Coast/Bay polar bears are called “angugalluit” and rarely seen in coastlines or landed; and are known to be healthier, bigger and stronger. Those that roam inland are known as “nanurluk”
- ▶ Female polar bears walk with their front legs inwards and faces are narrower, males walk straighter/wider and have a darker snout



Courtesy of James Tagalik

Diet

- ▶ Diet consisted mainly of marine mammals before the 1980's
- ▶ When they are not hungry, are known to eat only the fat parts of seals
- ▶ Some elders/hunters have seen polar bears eating caribou the past few years. One hunter even watched a polar bear take down a bull caribou!
- ▶ Polar bears are now constantly seen scavenging dump sites
- ▶ Polar bears that hibernate are known to eat grass to close their digestive tract



Collaring/Tranquilization

- ▶ Elders and hunters are not comfortable with the fact that polar bears are tranquilized and collared
- ▶ Elders and hunters believe polar bears lose their ability to hunt when they have been collared. Collared polar bears seem skinny and unhealthy compared to un-collared polar bears
- ▶ Collared polar bears are seen more so scavenging dump sites and readily available food sources rather than hunting on their own
- ▶ Elders believe those that have been tranquilized and/or collared have less fear of humans
- ▶ Some elders/hunters are afraid to consume polar bear meat because of chemicals in tranquilized bears but those that do eat it consider it a rare delicacy



Detering Polar Bears

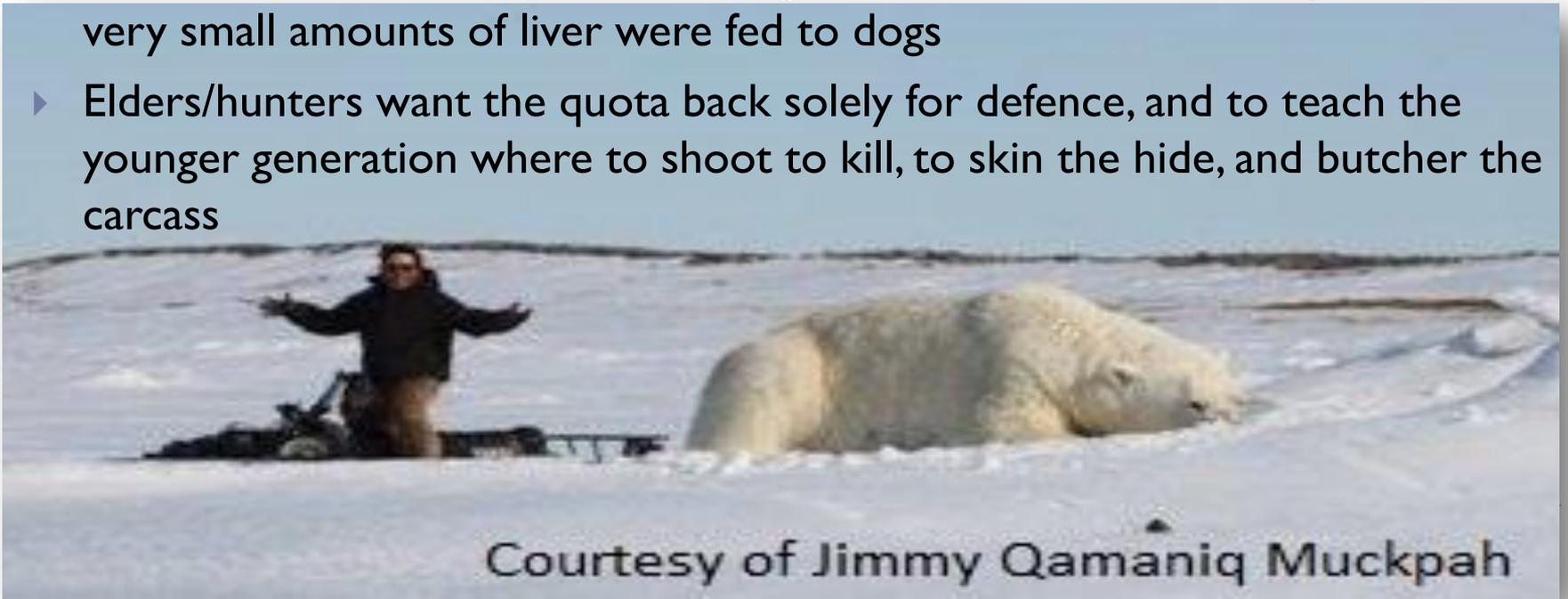
- ▶ One elder have been approached by polar bears on three occasions and was not harmed. He said if approached by a polar bear without weapons or shelter; to stay still.
- ▶ Curious bears will sniff at the person and its surroundings, stand on its hind legs before running off
- ▶ A hungry bear approached an elder while he was feeding a team of dogs, and deterred it by hitting the legs with a qamutik
- ▶ A homeowner in Arviat deterred a polar bear approaching his house and was able to deter it with a stick
- ▶ If fire is available, it can be used to gain distance from a polar bear as they are afraid of fire
- ▶ The last option to deter a polar bear is to shoot around it. In the modern day, polar bears are chased away from the community of Arviat, shot with bear bangers, cracker shells and rubber bullets. Self defence is only used when human life or property are in danger.
- ▶ An elder suggested youth/young people be taught how to deter polar bears. He stated they do not know the strength and behaviour of polar bears.

Courtesy of Leah M. Mack



Hunting of Polar bears before TAH

- ▶ All elders and hunters interviewed stated they refrained from hunting polar bears before quota was introduced.
- ▶ Inuit did not solely hunt for polar bears and were only harvested if sighted and needed.
- ▶ Hides were used to smoothen qamutik bottoms as they were made out of ice. It was also used as a sleeping platform or tarp.
- ▶ Meat was consumed and used as dog food. Liver was avoided by Inuit, but very small amounts of liver were fed to dogs
- ▶ Elders/hunters want the quota back solely for defence, and to teach the younger generation where to shoot to kill, to skin the hide, and butcher the carcass



Concerns



- ▶ Polar bears are now choosing to scavenge dump sites and leashed dog team locations for readily available food sources. Polar bears were known to be fierce marine hunters.
- ▶ Arviat citizens can't camp in coastal lines and southern inland areas because there are too many bears. Those who do hunt during summer/fall seasons have to take turns hunting to ensure safety from polar bears.
- ▶ Polar bears have lost their fear of humans possibly because of too much interference in the tourism industry in Churchill, Manitoba.
- ▶ When they migrate through Arviat, they are not afraid of cracker shells, rubber bullets, or any other form of deterrent. Some just sniff the location the bullet landed at.
- ▶ Cubs are learning to scavenge dump sites from their mothers and feel it is normal.
- ▶ Polar bear behaviour has become unpredictable. They do not have the same patterns anymore. Mature bears are known to stay away from communities and humans, where sub-adults have no fear of entering a community and Arviat is lucky to have no human-bear conflicts.



Last words

- ▶ There are too many polar bears migrating and roaming through the community of Arviat, citizens worry during fall season as the traffic of polar bears is too high
- ▶ Arviat residents would like to be able to harvest polar bears to pass on knowledge from one generation to another. Hunting is a part of Inuit tradition.
- ▶ The community of Arviat has worked together to deter polar bears, from organizations like Arviat HTO, Arviat Search and Rescue, Hamlet of Arviat, Department of Environment, Canadian Rangers have been nice enough to patrol during Halloween season so children can trick-or-treat without running onto a polar bear...

