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CETACEOUSNESS AND GLOBAL WARMING
AMONG THE IÑUPIAT IN ARCTIC ALASKA

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

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For the People of the Whales in Barrow and Point Hope, Alaska

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PREFACE

On August 6, 1998, I crossed the Bering Strait for the first time in my life. It was a trip from Nagoya, Japan, via Chicago to my final destination of Norman, Oklahoma, more than 6,000 miles (10,000 kilometers) away. A fortunate mishap placed me upon a business class seat but this splendor did absolutely nothing to heal my heart. It was my first trip to "Amelika," as the Japanese say. Leaving my home, family, two dogs, and friends behind, I was on my way to the former Indian Territory to study Native American cultures. My first journey to Oklahoma turned out to be a trail of tears. Filled with sadness, nervousness, and unexpected placelessness, immediately after parting with my parents, uncle, and aunt at the airport, I bitterly regretted my future plans. I was twenty-one, young and naïve. Until a few days before, I had been quite confident that I would do well wherever I went on the earth. However, my confidence collapsed all too easily when the truth revealed itself; I knew nobody in Oklahoma, and I had nowhere to stay. It felt like this new beginning in life took me away from home too abruptly. I was overwhelmed. I grew extremely sensitive as my distance from Japan increased and the movie on the plane—*Titanic*—did not help: though unrelated to the lovers' fate with an iceberg and demise, my tears did not stop flowing as I regretted my seemingly too ambitious choice of going to an unknown land on my own. The gentleman next to my seat offered me a stick of gum, but I refused it politely and instead gulped down a shot of Bombay Sapphire. It did not make me feel better but at least it dulled my emotions.

My long-yearned-for sleep never came. I rolled up the small airplane blind and the bright sunlight stung my swollen red eyes. The world outside was a place beyond my imagination. The vastness of the horizon easily fooled my eyes and the distance seemed so immense that it totally distorted my sense of reality. The North, the vast whiteness, instantly told me of the high latitude. But I, not yet a geographer, was unaware of the exact location. Tracing the route on the electronic map, I figured that the aircraft had just made it into the United States—Alaska. The illustrated path on the interactive map was showing that the craft had just flown over Nunivak Island. It was the northernmost point I had ever flown over. Mesmerized by the landscape, my exhausted mind began daydreaming of how the ancestors of Native Americans had once walked across the land bridge between Siberia and North America thousands of years ago. Then, my blurred eyes caught a dot going across the sea—it might have been a boat, ship, or even a larger vessel. Although it seemed extremely small from 26,000 feet (8,000 meters), it was a clear sign of life. The contrast between the vast seascape and the tiny boat was simply beautiful to my sad eyes. Then—I could have been imagining—I thought I saw a whale. The vision had a calm strength and enchantment. Although I did not see any settlements from the airplane, the idea that this rather rugged landscape was home to people made me feel humble. It became a powerfully transforming moment for me. I said to myself, "Okay, there is no turning back." Imagining the people who call this frozen white land home, I fell into a deep sleep.

Now nine years later, my debts are great, and my gratitude goes to literally hundreds of people who have helped and supported me at various stages of this dissertation research. First and foremost, I wish to thank the people of Barrow and Point Hope, Alaska, for their continuing help with and interest in my work. Dr. Bob Rundstrom suffered through painful early versions of the following chapters, and for that I am

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From the time I left my small apartment in Norman to travel to Barrow in 2004, I have encountered the most humbling generosity and kindness. To my Iñupiaq families and friends whom I lived and hunted with, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude—*quyanaqpak*. I am forever indebted to the Barrow families that adopted me, fed me, and spent time with me, especially to PK-13 Crew and Kaleak Crew. Their love, trust, and goodwill opened up the doors of the world that otherwise might have stayed closed to me. Mae and Kiogak Ahgeak are the *umialik* who initially welcomed me on the sea ice to become part of their whaling cycle and beyond. The members of the crew became my irreplaceable family and friends: thanks go to Edna Ahgeak MacLean (or "Dr. MacLean"), Qalu Ahgeak, Iqiḷan Ahgeak and Lonnie Solomon, Susie and John Oyagak, Flossie and Roy Nageak, Sr., Ernest and Salomi Nageak, Salomi and Michelle Ahgeak-Martin, Lucy Ann, Molly Vera, Pamiuq and Kaden Pikok, Katie and Paul Kignak, Saaŋiaq and Fenton Rexford, Vincent and Lillibeth Nageak, Mary Ann Iqiḷan Warden, Ben Nageak, Mattie Jo and Uinniq Ahgeak, Aqi Brower, James "Matu" Matumeuk and Eileen Boskofsky, and the benevolent spirits of the late Paul and Salomi Kignak, Sr. who always stay with us. To late Nate Pamiuq Elavgak—Uncle Pamiuq— who passed away on October 8, 2007 before the completion of this dissertation, I owe great depth of love and humor; I will remember the good times I had shared with him when PK-13 caught the whale in 2005. Julia and Jeslie A. Kaleak, Sr., the *umialik* of Kaleak Crew, also extended their love to me and adored me as their adopted daughter in addition to their three grown-up sons and four grandchildren. For their love and friendship, I am deeply indebted. Special thanks to Angelito and Mary Eka Gueco, Jeslie Jr., Lillian, Katelyn and J.J.J. and Andrew Kaleak, Roni, Leo, Sr. and Leo Jr. Kaleak, Tom and Rhonda Pikok, Carl and Donna Kippi, Teri Kaleak, Van Edwardsen, Charmaine and Billy Kaleak. Other

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The vast, powerful North has remained on my mind ever since I caught an aerial glimpse of it in 1998. Alaska, where the frozen land meets the icy ocean, was always there for me every time I made the round-trip between Oklahoma and Nagoya, my two homes. To me, the North began to feel like a symbolic place bridging my childhood and adulthood, Japan and the United States. In this way, Alaska became a part of my identity.

My sentiment toward this northern land kept growing as much as my love of Oklahoma grew. At the beginning, I was simply curious: Who were the people I saw from the sky? Were there really whales under such icy sea water? …. This innocent yet tenacious curiosity fueled my interest as a graduate student, and later, one autumn morning under a blue-yellow moon, I found myself in the midst of whiteness, 340 miles (550 kilometers) north of the Arctic Circle. Leaving Oklahoma for this edge of the world was another nervous and emotional experience. It was my very first trip to Alaska, much less the Arctic. Barrow, a settlement of approximately 4,600 people, clings to the northern tip of the North American continent like a finger jutting out into the Arctic Ocean. Situated in a marginal location, Barrow's satellite dishes have to point at right angles to the ground to communicate with the "lower 48." However, I soon found that the Arctic was not the end of the world. Rather, it was on the top of the world.

The native residents at the top of the world are called the Iñupiat, the "real" (*piat* or *piaq*) "people" (*iñu*) (Nelson, 1969, 1980; Lowenstein, 1992) or the "authentic human beings" (Burch, 1998). The term Iñupiat is plural but it also handles possessive. The singular, possessive, and the adjective form of the word is Iñupiaq (Burch, 1998; Wohlforth, 2004). Iñupiaq is also the name of the people's language, which remains vital

to their everyday life. The people crossed *Beringia*, the Bering Land Bridge, approximately 2,000 years ago and were one of the latest migrants to North America who developed the Thule tradition (1 C.E. to 1,600 C.E.) (Park, 2006). Sometimes known as one of the "Eskimos," the Iñupiat extend from the Arctic Ocean to the west central portion of Alaska's Bering Sea. In Iñupiaq country, the temperature often drops to minus 58 degrees Fahrenheit (approximately minus 50 degrees Celsius), with a wind chill of minus 90 degrees Fahrenheit (approximately minus 70 degrees Celsius). For thousands of years the Iñupiat worldview has been centered on the bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*) that they revere and hunt in a cyclical rhythm (Figure 1.1). Their traditional life has been sustained through interactions with abundant wild animals: mostly whales but also seals, walrus, moose, caribou, polar bears, murres, geese, and fish like Arctic char and cisco.

The Iñupiat call themselves the "People of the Whales" (Figure 1.2). Bowhead whales can weigh approximately one ton per foot (30 cm) and can live up to 200 years, or 130-150 years on average (Reeves, 2002). Bowheads are among the largest and longest-living animals on the earth. The flesh of the whale is high in vitamins A and C and other components such as thiamin, riboflavin, and niacin that traditionally sustained Iñupiat physiology in a climate that is unsuitable for agriculture (Freeman, Bogoslovskaya, et al., 1998). Not surprisingly, the People of the Whales depend on the bowhead for sustenance and cultural meaning. The whale is the foundational entity through which all elements of Arctic life are integrated —sea, land, animals, and humans. Indeed, the bowhead remains central to Iñupiaq life and culture, and sustains traditional rituals and ceremonies (Zumwalt, 1988; Lowenstein, 1992, 1993; Turner, 1993;



Figure 1.1—The Bowhead Whale (*Balaena mysticetus*). A fifty-one foot (seventeen meter) female bowhead whale landed off Barrow, Alaska, by Kaleak Crew, captained by Jeslie Kaleak, Sr. The whale shows its lower jaw and the abdomen with a flipper hanging down in this photo. Baleen plates are also visible in the photograph projecting out from its upper jaw. (22 May, 2005)



Figure 1.2—People of the Whales. The physical and spiritual unity between the Iñupiat and the bowhead whale grows from a very early stage of life. This photograph shows Barrow children standing on a landed bowhead whale. (1 October, 2005)

Brewster, 2004). Through the hunting process, associated ceremonials and other events, and the communal distribution of meat and other body parts, the bowhead remains central to Iñupiaq cultural survival and worldview.

These ties between the Iñupiat and the bowhead have been threatened on many different levels since the advent of "Yankee" whalers at the end of the nineteenth century. Indiscriminate American commercial whaling decimated the bowhead population by the 1920s, a fact which greatly affected how the International Whaling Commission (IWC) conceptualized and negotiated indigenous whaling rights in the 1970s. The commercial whalers were followed by the inevitable, but uninvited arrival of missionaries to traditional whaling communities. Presbyterians reached Barrow in 1890, the same year the Episcopal mission arrived at Point Hope, Alaska. While they saved many lives with their medical treatments, the missionaries' religious proselytizing resulted in the abolition and abandonment of many traditional beliefs and rituals associated with whales and whaling. During his anthropological fieldwork in Point Hope in the late 1950s, James W. VanStone (1962) found that villagers had come to totally accept Christianity. Christianity is present not just in people's minds but in the landscape in the form of cemeteries framed by large whale jawbones inscribed with the Episcopal Cross (Figure 1.3). The numerous snow-white whale jawbones protrude from the earth as if to reach out to the sky, creating a surreal, breathtaking view over the expanding tundra. Due to the sheer flatness of the tundra, even from a distance, the crowded space filled with irregular bones exudes an almost festive visual energy, one quite different from what most cemeteries in the south suggest. The whalebone graveyard highlights the syncretic nature of Christianity and indigenous respect for the whales; through landscape the Iñupiat narrate their respect for their home and their past. In spite of the series of southern encroachments, the Iñupiat

have maintained the practical aspects of their lives, including subsistence hunting, by incorporating Christian influences, firearms, snowmobiles, and stored goods (Turner, 1993).



Figure 1.3—Point Hope Whalebone Cemetery. (5 September, 2005)

After the discovery of oil in the 1970s, further changes took place in this part of the Arctic. In accordance with the establishment of the North Slope Borough (NSB) in 1972 (Figure 1.4), new money from oil development came with ideas of land ownership, new housing, school systems, and clinics (Turner, 1993). The Borough is demarcated by the Brooks Range to the south and the Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea of the Arctic Ocean to the north, encompassing 89,000 square miles (143,200 square kilometers). Overall, the NSB region included 7,555 residents in 2000, of whom 72. 3 percent were Iñupiat (North Slope Borough, 2000). Although no oil was discovered in or west of Barrow, its regional impacts brought major changes to Iñupiat lifeways and cosmology.

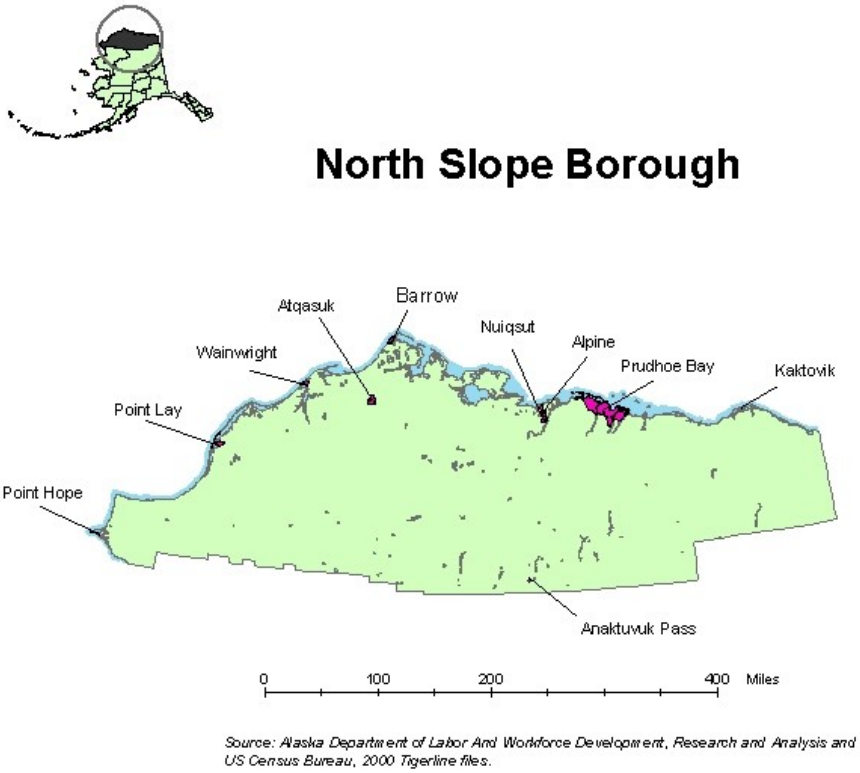


Figure 1.4—North Slope Borough, Alaska.

Furthermore, environmental pollution and contamination (Wheatley and Wheatley, 1981; O'Neil, Elias, and Yassi, 1997; Kassam and The Wainwright Traditional Council, 2000; Poirier and Brooke, 2000), non-renewable resource extraction (Chance, 1983; North Slope Borough, 1983), and nuclear threats (Chance, 1993; O'Neill, 1995) have affected the Iñupiat livelihood in their homeland. In spite of all these recurrent impacts on traditional lifeways, a substantial percentage of Iñupiat maintain a balance between subsistence hunting with capitalistic enterprise. First and foremost they still identify themselves as the People of the Whales. However, their worst trial may be yet to come.

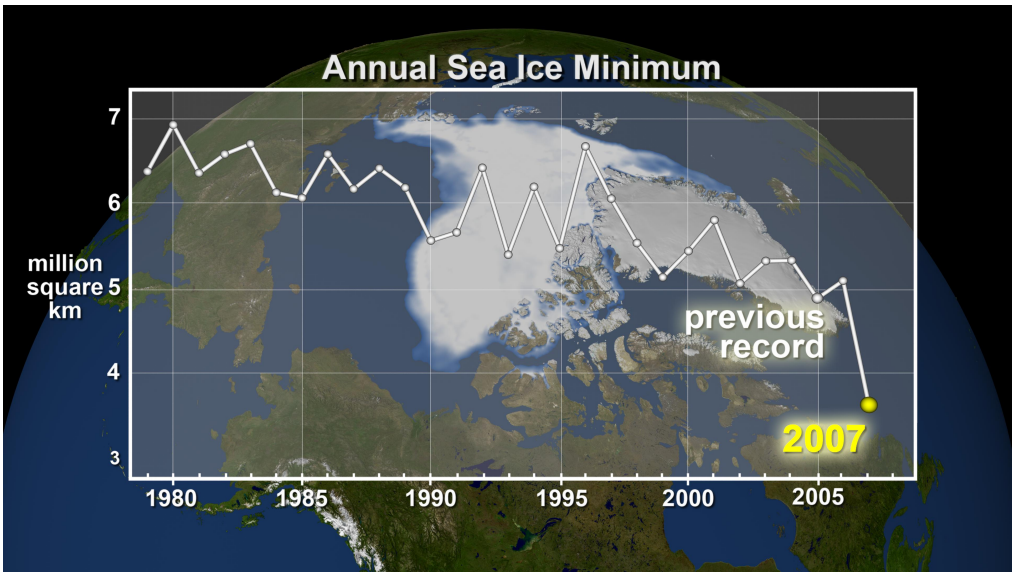
There is a growing scientific and empirical consensus that increasing concentration of greenhouse gases is, in fact, warming the climate of the earth (Lachenbruch and Marshall, 1986; Etkin 1990; Stirling and Derocher, 1993; Morison, Aagaard, and Steele, 2000). At this point I should clarify my usage of the terms weather and climate. Iñupiaq people differentiate between these two terms and have particular knowledge and observations of both. Climate is associated with seasonal averages and patterns while weather refers to the day-to-day atmospheric conditions that are crucial to hunting and other activities. The weather is immediately important for daily activity, and undoubtedly the climate and entire environment that the Iñupiat depend on to support their way of life are changing today. The relationship between weather and the Iñupiat is more intimate than for most people in the United States. Their daily traditional activities are almost entirely dictated by the weather. The weather in the Arctic determines if daily activities can be carried out safely and productively. Meanwhile, the climate in part determines the ability of the land and animals to produce natural supplies of fur, meat, and berries. The Iñupiaq people used to be able to commonly predict weather patterns and seasonal climate characteristics, now they struggle to do so.

Climate change is occurring in the Arctic six to eight times faster than other areas at lower latitudes (Duerden, 2004). Environmental changes that may be regarded as minor elsewhere have significantly influenced the physical and cultural dimensions of life in the Arctic, directly threatening indigenous populations (Duerden, 2004; Weller, 2004). Iñupiat relationship with the land and animals are affected by a number of elements including weather, climate and environmental changes, government regulations, animal movements, and health and subsistence ways of living. The most recent Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), held in Barrow in 2006, emphasized the immediate

impact of global warming on native peoples and the anticipated human responses at both local and global scales.

The Arctic region experienced record sea ice minimum in June through September 2007, well below the sea ice minimum observed in September 2005, the previous lowest record (Table 1.1). According to the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC), on September 16, 2007, sea ice extent dropped to 1.59 million square miles (4.13 million square kilometers)—38 percent below average and 24 percent below the 2005 record (NASA Earth Observatory, 2007a). Arctic sea ice reflects most of the sunlight reaching it. In contrast, dark ocean water absorbs most of the sunlight. Sea ice not only reflects sunlight, but it provides an irreplaceable platform for Iñupiat subsistence activities, especially the whale hunt. The report, concludes that Arctic sea ice could melt seasonally completely as early as 2030 if present trends continue (NASA Earth Observatory, 2007a).

Table 1.1—Annual Sea Ice Minimum, 1980-2007.



Source: Cole, S. (25 September, 2007)

Without question, increasingly unpredictable weather and climate patterns and associated environmental changes raise deep fears and cause tremendous pains among the Iñupiat. Such emotional reactions fuel cultural responses to global warming, a central finding of my fieldwork. As Elmer Frankson of Point Hope puts it:

> Our ancestors passed down this ability to adapt to us; adapt to any changes or problems. We are the strongest people in the world. That's why we're placed on top of the world … we fought and won when the IWC tried to take away our whaling right. But this time, we're not sure what to do or what comes the next. I sure know something scary is going on … we might be going through an irreplaceable loss to our heritage. Everything is changing too quickly. The whales might go away from us. We might not be able to hunt the whales soon. Climate change? Global warming? Our enemy is too big this time. With this change, we don't know where to begin with or what. We don't know how to fight. This is the biggest challenge that we've ever faced, and there's no way out. (18 August, 2005)

Referring to global warming and community concerns, Jack Schaefer, Vice President of the Native Village of Point Hope, comments:

> I am just hoping that we can be [the] people that blow the whistle [to the rest of the world]. But we are considered as uncredible [*sic*] people in reference to what we're saying in dealing with animals [and their changes] that we have noticed because we are grassroots, we are a small community … and so we are unable to provide a clear response as to the impacts. (18 June, 2006)

Although the ancestors of today's Iñupiat have gone through numerous stages of environmental change and cultural adaptation, Frankson and Schaefer both stress that there were no other phases in their history in which the Iñupiat were forced to confront

this “unbearable” type of emotional struggle and future uncertainty. “Our ground is melting and we are losing the land and the sea—the whales—altogether,” Elmer added.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is based on my fieldwork among North Slope Borough whaling communities between 2004 and 2006. As a member of two Barrow whaling crews, the PK-13 and Kaleak families, I participated in three seasonal hunts. Each had varying degrees of success. While based in Barrow, I also spent a good deal of time in Point Hope where, in addition to participant observation, I conducted a series of ethnographic interviews. Throughout my fieldwork, my goal was to investigate how the Iñupiat today maintain their physical and spiritual links with the bowhead whales in ways that sustain their cultural identity and help them cope with environmental change. What I found was that the Iñupiat process environmental change and their associated fears about it by strengthening their traditions, especially the cultural expressions that serve to maintain connections among people, animals, and their homeland.

In this dissertation, I investigate specific ways in which climate warming in the Arctic influences Iñupiaq society, particularly those cultural institutions and practices that link people spiritually and materially with bowhead whales. Several studies demonstrate the impact of climate change on land, sea and human livelihoods, on the economics of human existence, and our human perceptions of environmental change (Riedlinger and Berkes, 2001; Vincent, Gibson, and Jefferies, 2001; Huntington, 2002; Ford and Smit, 2004; Fox, 2004; George et al., 2004). Comparatively few studies, however, examine the impact of environmental change on the contemporary social organization of everyday life. Similarly, a shift in Iñupiat cultural dimensions caused by climate change has yet to

be discussed extensively in the literature. In this study, I argue that by influencing the bowhead harvest and the Iñupiat homeland, climate change increases environmental uncertainties that both threaten and intensify human emotions tied to identity. This emotional intensity is revealed in the prevalence of traditional and newly invented whale-related events and performances, the number of people involved, the frequency of their involvement, and the verve or feelings with which they participate. Thus, the task of this study is to investigate how collective uncertainty about the future of the environment is expressed and managed in Iñupiaq practices, and by extension, how deeply climate change penetrates the cultural core of their society.

COLLABORATIVE RECIPROCITY AND *CETACEOUSNESS*

The notion of "collaborative reciprocity" is crucial for understanding the Iñupiaq resilience as reflected in traditional whaling. Central to the Iñupiaq notion of collaborative reciprocity is the belief that humans and animals physically and spiritually constitute each other, that the soul, thoughts, and behaviors of animals and people interpenetrate in a collaboration of life (Fienup-Riordan, 1990). This relationship is fundamental to many indigenous moral philosophies, a cornerstone for an appropriate way of life (Momaday, 1974; Nelson, 1980; Basso, 1996). For example, many indigenous groups in the Arctic understand that animals willingly give themselves to hunters in response to receiving respectful treatment as "non-human persons" in their own right (Nelson, 1980; Fienup-Riordan, 1990; Brewster, 2004). Such relations are understandably influenced by animal behavior, distributions and availability, all of which are influenced by climate change (Tynan and DeMaster, 1997; Vincent, Gibson, and Jefferies, 2001; Krupnik and Jolly, 2002; Duerden, 2004; George et al., 2004; Nicholas,

Berkes, Jolly, Snow, and The Community of Sachs Harbour, 2004; Oozeva et al., 2004).

Collaborative reciprocity also should be understood as an adaptive strategy to engage Arctic life. Not only does it link human welfare with that of animals, but it affords people a means of expressing their concerns about environmental changes, and for coping and adapting to such changes. This interrelationship is demonstrated in various ways, most of them publicly visible. In Iñupiaq society, collaborative reciprocity is revealed in the way whale hunting is organized and conducted, the manner in which food is produced and consumed, in the use of whale body parts in the built environment, in the content and performative styles of Iñupiaq music, storytelling, and in many other aspects of ceremonial and everyday life.

This study is not about the fragility of Iñupiaq society or identity. What I found is that the Iñupiaq people retain and strengthen their cultural identity to survive unexpected difficulties with an unpredictable environment. They do so consciously and unconsciously by reinforcing their relationship with the whales. By presenting people's voices and using humanistic methods, this study shows how a whale-centric worldview based on the notion of collaborative reciprocity—what I call *cetaceousness*—has been influenced by unpredictable environmental change and how people work toward retaining their identity throughout their physical and spiritual associations with the whales.

Cetaceousness is a hybrid of *cetaceous* and *consciousness*, which links human awareness with cetaceans or whales. I am grateful to my advisor, Dr. Robert Rundstrom, who originally coined this term for my study. The idea of *cetaceousness* evokes the strong interrelatedness of the Iñupiat and the whales at both spiritual and physical levels. I use this term to refer to human-whale interactions at all levels. *Cetaceousness* is a social and emotional process for the Iñupiat to communicate with the whales and vice versa.

Among the Iñupiat of Point Hope, an origin story portrays the dramatic transformation of a bowhead into their ancestral homeland (Lowenstein, 1992, 1993). To the Iñupiat, then, their land used to be a whale whose death coincided with the birth of a human habitat. Furthermore, human and whale identities are interchangeable in Iñupiaq storytelling, which exhibits emotional kinship among the people, the land, and the whales (Lowenstein, 1992; Reimer, 1999). Negative changes in human-whale relations therefore will cause a substantial shift in Iñupiaq well-being and cultural continuity.

While my Iñupiaq correspondents unanimously expressed the importance of unity between the humans and whales, I soon learned that there were no Iñupiaq concepts or words directly equivalent to *cetaceousness*, except possibly the word Iñupiaq itself, since it also means the People of the Whales. During my ethnographic interviews and conversations with villagers, I casually brought up the idea of *cetaceousness* to see how my collaborators would respond to the term and if they had other words or ideas associated with it in their cultural tradition or vocabulary. Table 1.2 shows a variety of interpretations and dimensions of human-whale relations perceived and experienced by whaling community residents. Isaac Killugvik of Point Hope told me:

> We didn't have to have that word or we never had to explain our relationship [with the whales] in a word like that. We grew up with whales and the animals have always been part of us. In a way, the whale had been so merciful to us that there was no worry for us to describe our closeness. Humans and whales had been one around here, always. Not that this idea [*cetaceousness*] is not important, but we didn't even think of it because it was natural to have whales around us … they always came back … it has always been like that. (29 August, 2005)

However, "[N]ow that we have strange weather, late winters and early springs, and who knows something bad may happen to the whales," continues Isaac, "we may need that term [*cetaceousness*] to have non-Eskimo people understood [*sic*] the value of the whales to our lives and urge them to think about our sea and land." Ben Nageak of Barrow describes his people's fundamental relationship with the bowhead as "the *whale*-ness of the Iñupiat" (18 April, 2005). The whale is deeply intertwined with human existence and spirituality as the following statements reveal: "Whales, that's who we are" (Caroline Cannon, Point Hope, 28 August, 2005); "[W]e grow up with whales" (Irene Tooyak, Point Hope, 31 August, 2005); and "[t]he whale-centeredness keeps us coming together in our land" (Jeslie Kaleak, Sr., Barrow, 2 July, 2005). *Cetaceousness* therefore embodies the inseparable human-whale associations in the Iñupiat sea and land (Figure 1.5). To study the transformation of Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* in the face of global warming, this dissertation draws upon a variety of topics, such as hunting practices, food production, storytelling, musical expressions, and identity politics rooted in place. *Cetaceousness*, as a unifying theme, becomes a foundation to assess current Iñupiaq response to climate change.

Table 1.2 — *Cetaceousness* in Iñupiaq. (B=Barrow; P=Point Hope)

***Cetaceousness* in Iñupiaq**	**English translations**	**Village**	**Sex**	**Age**	**Affiliations**
Aġviqsiuq	Whaling	B	F	45	Captain's sister
Aġviqiluitainuiumiachuit	Without the whale we are not alive	B	M	56	Whaling captain
N/A	Bloodline with the whales	B	M	55	Whaling captain
N/A	The survival	B/P	F	47	Captain's wife
Iñuñalaq	The way of life	P	F	48	Captain's sister
Aanġuaq	amulet that opens human-whale relations	B	F	62	Crew member/Elder
Aŋŋuaq	amulet used in whaling as a hook	P	F	64	Captain's mother/Elder
Iñua	whale-whaling captain relations and ties	B	M	52	Whaling captain
Atauchiqun	Togetherness; whale brings us unity	P	M	48	Whaling captain
Avaġualluqtaaq aġviqsiuq	In the circle of the whale/whaling	P	F	42	Crew member
Peqpagi	Respect for the whales	P	F	69	Former whaling captain/Elder
Kamanaġi	Treat the whales well	P	F	82	Former whaling captain/Elder
Alakkaa	The deepest respect	P	M	40	Whaling captain
Aarigaa	Very good; being happy and fulfilled	B /P	M and F	55 and 62	Captain's wife and Elder



Figure 1.5—*Cetaceousness* and Iñupiaq Unity. *Cetaceousness* is revealed in various whale-related ceremonies and strengthens the social unity among the people. This photograph shows Kaleak Crew of Barrow, one of the successful whaling crews in the spring 2005. The crew is standing in front of an *umiak*, a seal-skin whaling boat. The occasion was *Apaġauti*, the feast on the beach to conclude the spring whaling. The partially frozen area in the background is the Arctic Ocean, the Iñupiaq hunting ground. (8 June, 2005)

OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is organized to illustrate different aspects of Iñupiaq *cetaceousness*, or the ways people make whales a central feature of their lives. Chapter II (Methods and Site Selections) introduces the principal approaches I used to conduct the study. As a humanist geographer, my aim was to interact with people through qualitative methods that are advanced in emotional and humanistic geography, phenomenology, participant observation, and ethnography. The ways in which several whaling families

adopted me as one of their own and the emotive bonds I established with the Iñupiaq villagers created a special relationship that forces me to disavow any claims to being a detached or neutral scientist. In fact, I often faced moral dilemmas about keeping a distance but expressing my profound gratitude to the generosity I received. In the process, I became reflective and began to think about how my own emotions informed my study.

In Chapter III (Whaling Peoples and Whaling Politics), I describe the recent roots of contemporary Iñupiaq political identity. I find that the Iñupiaq response to the 1977 ban on indigenous bowhead whaling imposed by the IWC marked a significant turning point in their strategies to protect their relationship with whales. I contend that the broader pan-Iñupiaq identity spawned through their activism has served to connect disparate communities and helped revitalize cultural traditions. Indigenous Arctic organizations, especially the ICC and the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC), are building on a proud knowledge of their past to confront the environmental problems of their future. The Iñupiaq people clearly understand that climate change is a different form of "southern encroachment" than those of the past, but they also know that bowhead whales are the key to their survival as the People of the Whales.

The next three chapters form the heart of my study and seek to illustrate how Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* is the outcome of traditional whaling at sea and the celebration of whales on land. In Chapter IV (*Aġviqsiuq*—Whale Hunt), I use ethnography to explore the preparations and rituals surrounding the whaling process. I show how the act of hunting whales and respectfully bringing them to land is first and foremost a social process that brings people together with each other and their whales. Using Iñupiaq voices, I discuss the social roles of whaling crews and whaling procedures. I show how the actual whale hunt is only one of the most important events within an annual whaling

cycle. In so doing, I examine how whales and people complement each other throughout the whaling cycle—despite changes in migration periods, marine ecosystems, and sea ice conditions associated with climate change. The chapter also sheds light on the struggles to maintain *cetaceousness* in an insufficient whaling season.

In Chapter V ("Our Home is Drowning": Iñupiaq Storytelling and Climate Change), I explore how a disappearing home is narrated in stories. Villagers of Point Hope have very vivid memories of their resettlement in 1977 to a location two miles (3.2 kilometers) away from their original place of residence. To the villagers, Old Town remains an emotional terrain and a drowning home. Through stories offered to me—often without prompting—I show how the Old Town site has become saturated with emotion, sometimes seeming wild and frightening and other times endowed with senses of home, rootedness, and nostalgia. The core of the chapter examines Iñupiaq storytelling and the way it both reveals and processes a changing spiritual and emotive landscape through its own transformation. I compare the stories people told me with those collected by Ernest S. Burch (1971) to find that the geography of supernatural experiences has shifted since the relocation. Storytelling transformations highlight poignant attachments to place that transcend distinctions between people, whales, and land. These emotions become integral to how places are perceived and portrayed, with profound implications for the embodied experiences of storytelling as a means of communication among themselves and with the environment. In order to preserve confidentiality with this sensitive subject matter, I cite my collaborators by pseudonyms. All other names used in this study are the actual names of my collaborators.

In Chapter VI ("No Whale, No Music": Iñupiaq Performance and Cultural Change), I elaborate on Iñupiaq ceremonial practices in the whaling cycle and how such

social customs have been affected by global warming. Climate change directly impacts Iñupiat social and cultural practices by making the acquisition of whale drum membranes uncertain due to delay in sea-ice formation and the timing of whaling-cycle ceremonies. These dimensions of environmental change ultimately threaten the very existence of the celebratory feasts and drum dances that end whaling season. In short, a warming climate disturbs all aspects of the whaling cycle, which includes mutual trust among villagers in a whaling village. To reveal Iñupiaq response to such challenges, I focus on their drum performance as one embodiment of *cetaceousness*.

As I put the finishing touches on this study, daily news reports remind me that the Arctic sea ice is shrinking faster than anticipated, and the amount of floating ice is smaller than any time in the recent past. The other day I spoke with Barrow whaling captain, Jeslie Kaleak, Sr., who echoed this point when he said "we are shifting into the new lifestyle, but I cannot picture my crew giving up on whaling. [Our relationship with the whale is] not just for ceremonies or food. We have to keep our deep relationship with the whale to stay here, just the way we always have been." The following chapters explore the Iñupiaq efforts to foster *cetaceousness* and to remain rooted in their homeland.

CHAPTER II
METHODS AND SITE SELECTIONS

In 2004, as a Ph.D. student, I began working with the community of Barrow to develop my dissertation ideas and field plans. At the time of my initial visit to the village, my academic interests focused primarily on human-animal relations, especially those that exist between the Iñupiat and the bowhead whales. It was only after hearing villagers' voices and interacting with whalers that my interests in *cetaceousness* and climate change became a vital portion of this work.

My preliminary visit to Barrow was logistically and financially sponsored by the Barrow Arctic Science Consortium (BASC). Dr. Glenn W. Sheehan, Executive Director, BASC, put me in contact with a variety of Iñupiaq personnel of the North Slope Borough (NSB) institutions: the NSB Department of Wildlife Management, the NSB School District Bilingual Program, the NSB Iñupiat History, Language and Culture Division (IHLC), the Iñupiat Heritage Center, Eben Hopson Sr. Memorial Middle School, Barrow High School, Iḷisaġvik College, and the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC). In Barrow, with the sincere assistance of Lollie Hopson—a respected elder and a retired BASC cultural liaison, I was warmly welcomed into the community. I became fascinated by the stories of the hunters and elders about their interactions with the environment through their astute observation skills, cultural resilience, and the pride of being traditional whalers. Generously fed with "native food" every day (bowhead whale, beluga, walrus, caribou, seal, fish, and many other wild meats), I became eager to learn more about what the Iñupiat value highly; *aġviq* (the bowhead whale) I knew for sure, and *silla* was one other Iñupiaq term that my foreign ears caught repeatedly throughout the visit.

Silla in both Iñupiaq and Inuktitut means the surrounding environmental conditions including weather; according to Shari Fox (2004), who conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Nunavut, the term means "the spirit that controls the weather" (p. xxiii). Without question, weather and climate have been shaping the indigenous subsistence in the circumpolar region for thousands of years. With its capacity to mobilize various types of winds, sea ice, and snow, *silla* connects and disconnects the human beings and the whales.

The Iñupiaq ancestors developed observation skills and bodily senses to predict and cope with the phenomena. However, when their descendents in the late twentieth century became aware of the increasingly unpredictable patterns of *silla*, the changes were prevalent across their Arctic environment, most critically on wildlife, especially marine mammals (Beverly Hugo, 20 November, 2004). As a result, it turned out that human livelihood needed to go through a transition in order to retain their connectivity with the bowhead whales. My study sheds light on how the People of the Whales cope with unpredictable *silla* through the development of their *cetaceousness* in the face of a long-term climate change.

To describe the methods of my research, I organize the present chapter into three sections: 1) emotional geography, humanism, and phenomenology; 2) ethnography and participant observation; and 3) study site selections. In the first section, I review academic methods and literature that focus on the collection of information about human experiences and emotions. In the second section, I discuss why I adopted ethnography and participatory research techniques for this project. Iñupiaq observations in their own words provide the foundation for this dissertation. I collected Iñupiaq voices through ethnographic interviews—my questions were informed by and related to my background

in ethnomusicology and Native American studies in addition to geography—as well as personal interactions and participant observation. I also reveal some of my personal and technical challenges and limitations that I encountered in the field, such as my language barrier and establishing my own place in the community as a non-Iñupiaq graduate student adopted by whaling families. There are a number of critiques and weaknesses of all humanistic-emotional, ethnographic, and participatory approaches, and I discuss these in relation to my fieldwork. In the final section, I examine how and why I came to select Barrow and Point Hope for my dissertation fieldwork. This section also includes short descriptions of the two traditional whaling communities, in which I conducted my fieldwork.

HUMANISM, PHENOMENOLOGY, AND EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHY

Emotional Geography

Human emotions are inseparable from the development of humanities and social sciences as our emotions are intricately entwined with our lives. In this dissertation, human emotions serve as the central analytical and descriptive medium. The English word "emotion" originally came from Latin, *emovere*, which means "to move" or "to move out" (Ahmed, 2004). By moving out of one's body, we relate ourselves to the outside world through emotions. Additionally, our emotions hold us in place or give us a home as a form of attachment to our land and surroundings. Therefore, emotional geography explores connection, attachment, and dynamic relationships between people and places (Bondi, Davidson, and Smith, 2005).

Emotional geography is not only about human sentiments and feelings, but also elaborates on a sense of emotional involvement of people with animals, places, and

environment (Bondi, Davidson, and Smith, 2005). In the past, especially prior to the embracement of humanism in the discipline, geographers used to present audiences with an "emotionally barren terrain;" yet the role of emotions is crucial in our interpretations and understanding of the world (Bondi, Davidson, and Smith, 2005). Among all human traits, emotions are especially important fundamentals of my research. The intensity of *cetaceousness*, for example, is often revealed in human sentiments about the changing or disappearing terrain and seascape. The emotional approach of placing the people in the center helps me learn how environmental changes may be explicitly and implicitly felt, transmitted, and manifested among the Iñupiat.

An Iñupiaq phrase *aarigaa* ("good" or "feels good") is described in many ways in the spectrum of humanity, but within the Iñupiaq community, it penetrates into the animal domain. It is a transmission of emotion to show respect. The expression reflects many beliefs and is generally associated with the whale and whaling. In this way, Iñupiat emotions run through their whaling and whale-related activities in the sea and on the land throughout their subsistence calendar. In recognition of these realities, this research is informed by how climate change impacts the range of emotion in both Iñupiat bodies and places. I argue that the emotional interrelatedness of people, animals and environments, and the increasing investments of Iñupiat emotions in representations of cultural identity, combine to strengthen their *cetaceousness* through reinvigorating social customs and cultural performances.

Humanism in Geography and Phenomenology

Emotional geography has its roots in the development of humanism in geography, the emphasis on human feelings as a medium to experience the world. Otherwise known

as humanistic geography, geographical humility (Relph, 1981), environmental humility (Relph, 1981), or the study of place, heart, and soul (Bunkše, 1996, 2004), humanism in geography emerged in the 1970s as a revision of scientific approaches that tend to separate nature from culture, art from science, mind from body, and humans from their habitat (Buttimer, 1993). Yi-Fu Tuan first discussed the meaning of humanistic geography in 1976 (Tuan, 1976). In response to Tuan's work, Nicholas Entrikin (1976) then related humanism to the use of phenomenological analysis. Humanism highlights the meanings of human experiences by placing a human body in the center of a place. By centering subjectivity, humanistic geographers explore how a sense of place gets rooted in environmental meaning and human experience (Buttimer, 1993; Bunkše, 2004).

One crucial characteristic that various humanistic approaches have in common is their distance from a rational science that privileges detachment and objectivity. Humanists clarify that human beings are no longer mere units of behavior in deterministic theories or quantitative models (Relph, 1981), and aim to repair the insufficiencies in scientific rationalism by putting people back together again with all the pieces in place, including a heart and a soul, with feelings as well as thoughts (Ley and Samuels, 1979). Humanistic geography is thus a redirection of social science, neither critical of science nor beside it, but complementary in its desire to seek a comprehensive view of human experience (Tuan, 1976; Ley and Samuels, 1979; Relph, 1981). To contrast Entrikin's (1976) description of humanistic geography as a form of criticism, I find humanistic geography to be an active and constructive approach that offers research possibilities by reconciling humanism and social science.

To discuss the impact of global warming, social science now recognizes the importance of the humanism because it links cultural and environmental well-being.

However, although social science research pays attention to climate change's correlation with cultural transformation (Duerden, 2004; Bondi, Davidson, and Smith, 2005) as well as native views of environmental change (Duerden, 2004; Fox, 2004), few social scientists have touched on indigenous cultural responses to changing environments or elaborated on the emotional qualities of social life in transition (Cruikshank, 2001; Nuttall, 1998; Duerden, 2004). Granted, accessing indigenous worldviews and contextualizing humanistic-environmental factors are daunting tasks. The current situation shows that the barriers between insider and outsider as well as subjectivity and objectivity are not easy concepts to move among. This gap, however, may be bridged by a method called phenomenology.

Phenomenology emphasizes the importance of direct intuitional experience of human beings in the world (Entrikin, 1976). Phenomenology is not anti-science but its strong first-person approach creates problems for the third-person approaches of hard science. In phenomenological thinking, experiences such as intuition, feeling, and emotion become valuable sources of information. Phenomenology rarely focuses on institutions, structures or class interests, but attempts to understand the various aspects of societies and environments in terms of how they are experienced by individuals (Relph, 1981). In this sense, human feelings became inseparable from cultural expressions, and emotions are no longer regarded as something innate and inward, but rather as a culturally interwoven mode of human experience and environment (Williams, 2001; Finnegan, 1977, 2003). Therefore, phenomenological understanding helps a fieldworker to transcend dichotomous insider/outsider and subjective/objective barriers.

The field tradition in humanistic geography is strengthened by phenomenological approaches (Seamon, 1979; Porteous 1989; Driver, 2000). Tuan

(1976) supports a phenomenological perspective and emphasizes the links between geography and humanistic methods. Humanistic geography must, he suggests, be tolerant of ambiguity and paradox, philosophically inclined, and directed towards an understanding of the appreciation of landscape, of the attachment to place, and of the range of environmental experiences. Aided by phenomenology, the emotional approach can attain Tuan's goals for humanistic geography. Phenomenology raises the level of awareness about the emotional subtleties and complexities of how humans experience their environment. In addition to the capacities of intuition, emotion permeates our physical and cultural boundaries because it is relational and mobilizing.

Overall, phenomenology assisted me in the field in building a dialectical relationship with Iñupiaq villagers: the "outsider" (myself or other fieldworkers with a common tendency to "find" what we expect or "wish to find" in a foreign landscape) and the "insider" (the villagers who can be too immersed into the particulars of everyday life to observe cultural patterns) (Buttimer, 1980). This phenomenological dialectic encouraged me to jump into Iñupiaq communities where the people's first language is predominantly Iñupiaq.

At the beginning, because I was not fluent in Iñupiaq, I encountered numerous difficulties in fully understanding the context of the indigenous society and its customs. Although most residents of the North Slope today speak and understand English, limited Iñupiaq language skills often restricted my grasp of cultural idioms and meanings. Iñupiaq is still a vital element of existence and it, like other traditions, is actively kept alive by fluent speakers at social functions and through school curricula. Cultural meanings, experiences, emotions, places—indeed, all phenomena in any society are entirely caught up with its language (Feld, 1990; Basso, 1996). With monolingual elders,

I initially worked through interpreters who were often family members of the elders. However, I often felt out of place when the interpreters spoke for me, especially for interviews. I feared that I would remain an outsider and might not be able to access the genuine feelings of the villagers with this approach. To improve the situation, I supplemented my approach with my intuition. During my initial visit when I was assisted by an interpreter, I did my best to convey my enthusiasm and sincerity about my visit to my research collaborators with my facial and bodily expressions and voice. Although overcoming the language barrier still remained impossible, I was at least able to deliver my feelings better and honestly to the best of my Iñupiaq and English abilities, and frequently revisited the interview collaborators to spend more personal time together, to share fresh whale meat, and, last but not least, to exchange our personal stories and feelings. In spite of my linguistic deficiencies, when our mutually favorable feelings were thus communicated, there began to grow an invaluable sense of reciprocal trust and emotional kinship that transcended the insider-outsider dialectic. Through expressing emotions and maintaining intuitive communication, I felt that I was gradually accepted by older generations of Iñupiat in addition to the gracious understanding and support I received from their family members.

HUMANISTIC-EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHY IN THE FIELD: ITS MERITS AND LIMITS

One of the merits of conducting fieldwork from a humanistic perspective is that I could become part of the communities maintaining unstructured, everyday encounters with the residents through direct involvement in daily social events. Throughout my field research, I considered my research participants as my “collaborators” instead of my

"informants" or "research subjects." I spent time with them, chatted with them, shared food with them, was teased by them, learned their sense of humor, and was occasionally offered a place to spend a night or two to participate in hunting, cooking, and storytelling. To understand another person's experiences and emotions in a different culture, it is crucial to relinquish goals of objectivity and to create a mutually comfortable atmosphere.

The major limitation of a humanistic approach, however, is the flip side of its merit. Because a humanistic approach places a researcher closest to collaborators, the physical and emotional intimacy between the two parties may become high. This is when many researchers struggle with the dilemma of being a pro-community activist or an unbiased scholar. Any fieldwork draws researchers into relationships through various activities such as producing recorded conversations, taking field notes, and participating in community events (de Wit, 2003; Bondi, 2005).

During the course of my fieldwork, my interaction with my Iñupiaq collaborators was intended to draw out something of the layering of emotions related to their land and whales in the unpredictable environment. Most of the time I enjoyed my interviews and visits with my collaborators. However, there was one aspect of the fieldwork that troubled me. I spent time with the Point Hope villagers who used to live in the original settlement that was lost to the sea by the 1970s. While they missed Old Town and were extremely concerned about the difficult whaling season of the year in 2006, the villagers were facing a related yet more immediate problem: displacement of the whales for good. The possibility of whale displacement arose from the initiation of the five-year oil and gas leasing program (2007-2012) administered by the Mineral Management Service of the Department of the Interior and the accompanying seismic survey in the Chukchi Sea

off the coast of Point Hope that was to be held later in the summer of 2006. The purpose of the federal survey was to offer "lease areas" in the Chukchi Sea that might contain "economically recoverable oil and gas resources" (LaBelle, 2006, p. 60751). Jack Schaefer, Vice President of the Native Village of Point Hope, sent a petition addressed to the Conservation and Education Division of the Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, to stop the implementation of the plan. Schaefer expressed his people's opposition to any seismic activity as it relates to oil, gas, and development to protect their subsistence resources (Schaefer, 18 June, 2006). However, he received no response to his petition. "Combined with climate change," Schaefer elaborated, "this will cause us tremendous loss. We all showed our opposition at the public hearing for the environmental impact assessment." Earl Kingik told me point blank: "It will disturb our relation with the whales" (23 June, 2006). Esther Frankson put it this way: "They [the whales] will be angry or will be chased away from our village eternally" (22 June, 2006). The villagers left depressed with the thought, especially after the problematic whaling season in the previous spring.

Although I always explained that neither my research nor I could influence the outcome of the process of climate change or federal environmental policies, I still kept getting the sense that quite a few people were hoping that my research would be a strong advocate that would eventually save them out of the plight; in this case, to have the seismic survey and any future leases of the offshore area called off. I almost felt guilty. The people were willing to spend time with me and tell me about irreplaceable emotional relationships with the whales, somehow hoping I could do something for them in return for their friendship and hospitality. "When will your report come out?" they asked me frequently. "Not until next year." How sad it was to see how this response depressed

my collaborators who said to me, “That’d be too late!” I often could not offer any words. Liz Bondi (2005) documents a similar emotional turmoil during her own dissertation fieldwork, in which she spent time with individuals in a British city who were involved in campaigns against plans to close or merge local primary schools. Bondi describes how she felt uncomfortable dealing with the unavoidable expectations that she had received from her research collaborators throughout the fieldwork. Combining my own field experience with Bondi’s, emotions layered in research inadvertently intersect the standpoints of the researcher and collaborators, and sometimes result in a struggle between the two parties.

Of course, this field situation is not unique to humanists. However, to recognize this limitation of humanistic and emotional subjectivity, the explicitly interpretive nature of qualitative work requires researchers to state and address their biases. Experiencing the insider-outsider gap and eventually a transition between the two positions with my own body, feelings, and intuition became a valuable contribution to the research because I could better empathize and understand what the Iñupiat were experiencing.

ETHNOGRAPHY

I used two ethnographic techniques to supplement my emotional and humanistic approaches: individual and group interviews, and participant observation. Both these approaches benefited from direct community input. Specifically, many individuals suggested interview questions and what to look at or care about throughout my participation in community events. This section will discuss my views of ethnography, and discuss how I balanced my own emotions as a researcher in the field.

In its operational definition, ethnography is a written representation of a culture

based on fieldwork (Van Maanen, 1988), or the description of a culture (Bernard, 1988). Just like humanism and emotional approaches, ethnography places a researcher at the center of a culture, increasing the visibility of culture with a narrative of a researcher's "self-consciously selected words" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 3). The method tries to reveal the voices of those who might otherwise not be heard (Scheper-Hughes, 1992), and thus true objectivity should rarely be expected or desired in ethnography (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Ethnographic and humanistic approaches have this limitation in common. That said, my understandings of ethnography and humanism encouraged me to be self-reflective, to get involved with the community, and helped me recognize uncertainties, self-doubts, and personal growth during the period.

I conducted my fieldwork in three seasons: November, 2004; April through October, 2005; and May through July, 2006. Throughout these periods, I sought access to the Iñupiaq community by attending predominantly local events through actual participation in community life: e. g., a Thanksgiving feast (Figures 2.1), drum dance (also called "Eskimo Dance"; see Chapter VI), meetings of the Barrow Whaling Captains' Wives Auxiliary (*Ukpeaġvikmiut Agviqsiuqtit Agnanich*), community lunch for elders at the senior center (Figures 2.2), events hosted at the Iñupiat Heritage Center among many others (see Figure 4.1). During my first field season, my method was simply to take advantage of opportunities to participate whenever they occupied. My immediate response to community requests for help also developed a local network based on trust and friendship. For example, I was interviewed twice by Earl Finkler, a famous radio personality of the Barrow radio station, KBRW (Figure 2.3). Since KBRW is an extensive airwave that covers the NSB, Earl's program introduced me and my project to the ears of numerous village listeners. This often helped me avoid trouble when I moved

onto the interview phase. “I heard you on the radio!” Many people warmed up quickly and opened their doors to me with excitement. To introduce myself further and to let the local residents know of my research motivation, I also gave a series of public lectures at BASC and one lecture each at Iḷisaġvik College and Eben Hopson, Sr. Memorial Middle School in Barrow (Figure 2.4) to broaden my network and express my enthusiasm to become part of the community.



Figures 2.1—Thanksgiving Whale Feast, Barrow, Alaska. (25 November, 2004) Literally, it is the whales who bring the people together. Successful whaling crews and their relatives give away whale blubber (*muktuk*) and whale meat to the entire community at the Uktiaġviq Presbyterian Church. The feast goes on all day and the festivity is concluded with an Eskimo Dance at night.




Figures 2.2—Participating in Community Lunch with Elders. (19 November, 2004) Community lunch at the local Senior Center in my first visit to Barrow provided me with a good opportunity to get acquainted with the elderly community. On the left image, Lollie Hopson (facing the camera from far right) was introducing me to her friends at the table. The ladies in the right image are about to leave with to-go boxes.



Figure 2.3—KBRW Radio Streaming from the Top of the World. (10 September, 2005) In his 7:30 Morning Program, Earl Finkler interviews me about my *cetaceousness* research and personal background. I was also interviewed by Doreen Simmons of KBRW during my 2004 fieldwork. The positive feedback and encouragement of listeners greatly empowered me. Earl's article on his interview with me was later published in the weekly newsletter named *Arctic Sounder*, and which once again put me in the center of the villagers' attention.



Figure 2.4—Visiting Hopson Middle School, Barrow. (5 May, 2005) Photograph by Cyd Hanns. I sincerely enjoyed the process of cultural reciprocity during my interaction with middle school students.

Ethnographic Interviews

In total, I conducted eighty-eight interviews in Barrow and Point Hope—twelve people were interviewed multiple times. Most conversations were tape-recorded and I also kept notes during interviews. The basic format of my visit was one-on-one, face-to-face interviews at various locations of a collaborator's choice, usually his or her residence. Occasionally, it developed into a group session when my collaborator had visitors (Figure 2.5). I used an informal conversational approach, otherwise known as non-directive or unstructured interviewing. Rather than directing the collaborators with ready-made questions, I simply asked them to share any experiences or impressions they had regarding the bowhead whales, whaling, sea ice hunting, their homeland, and their feelings linked to recent changes in animals, weather, and climate. Sometimes our conversations digressed into seemingly unrelated issues, but these were also informative.



Figure 2.5—An Ethnographic Interview Scene. (15 June, 2006) I soon realized the benefits of an informal and conversational approach to accommodate the spontaneous lifeways and lively atmosphere of Iñupiaq households.

I found this approach most suitable to elders who are most comfortable with storytelling and telling anecdotal stories and life lessons. This method often allowed interviewees' unrecognized feelings and thoughts about environment to emerge without their having to formulate answers to specific questions. Most interview session took no more than one hour, but in some cases our conversations extended to three hours or longer, and I often accepted a cordial dinner invitation from the family. In this case, our conversation continued over whale meat, *muktuk* (bowhead blubber), and *mikiġaq* (fermented whale meat and *muktuk* marinated in the whale's blood).

In order to reciprocate, I presented my study progress to the public every three months. These opportunities were organized by the BASC Saturday Schoolyard Project sponsored by the National Science Foundation. I gave public presentations at Ukpeaġvik

Science Center, Barrow and each lecture was followed by thoughtful questions, comments, and discussions. For example, Alice Brower, a native of Barrow, came to my public lecture in June 2005. Alice's participation made my lecture interactive and approachable to the local audience with her vibrant personality and knowledge of traditional Iñupiaq whaling. Her participation filled in the gaps of my perspective as a cultural outsider and also stimulated the interest of younger villagers. Born and raised in Barrow, Alice is in her twenties, and she belonged to a few whaling crews through her kinship. Despite her young age, she grew up hearing community elders talk about climate and environmental change. Her rapport throughout my fieldwork became immeasurable asset and the continuous source of encouragement. Also working as a logistic coordinator for visiting scientists at BASC, Alice facilitated my interests in Iñupiaq culture and culture change as a form of environmental adaptation.

Alice introduced me to her uncle, an elderly whaling captain named David "Aŋaruk" Leavitt whose crew caught the first whale in 2005. Aŋaruk was in his late seventies, and had seen dramatic changes in weather and whaling conditions with his own eyes. Alice and I both went to help Aŋaruk Crew prepare for the captain's feast after the successful whale hunt where I met other crew members and families. In this way, one person led me to another, and I managed to build both research and friendship networks that continue to this day.

In order to select local participants for interviews, I used a technique called "snowball sampling" whereby key individuals or contacts are identified and asked to provide the names of others in the community who would likely be interested participants in the study (Bernard, 1988; de Wit, 1993). My collaborators included whaling captains, crew members, whaler's wives, local elders, and youth on the basis of their association

with the whales, whaling, and whale-related events. I established several networks in each community in order to avoid relying upon a single interview network within the scope of a single family or friend. For instance, in 2004, Lollie Hopson first took me to a meeting of the Barrow Whaling Captains' Wives Auxiliary upon my first visit to Barrow. The members gave me the names of local people, both male and female, to talk to. In some cases, they kindly took me to a potential collaborator's home and introduced me and my interests. In other cases, I introduced myself and explained how I received his or her name from a member of the association. In turn, those collaborators I visited suggested others to interview. From my experience, nothing outweighs face-to-face visits in building mutual trust and understanding of the context of emotional ups and downs of collaborators. In turn, collaborators are able to see my expressions and reactions, which gives them stronger assurance and camaraderie compared to phone interviews with an invisible academic. I elaborate on this sense of connectivity in the following section.

Participant Observation

Participant observation—"life imitating research" (Fox, 2004, p. 84)—is one of the principal ethnographic methods to study a particular group or locality. Participant observation is humanistic in its premise, and the researcher becomes part of the events being observed (Ellen, 1984; Dane, 1990; Fox, 2004). This method distinguishes ethnography from mere "interviews" or "just hanging out" with the locals. Further, participatory research strengthens researchers' involvement with their collaborators and mutual respect replaces conflicting interests between insiders and outsiders (Nettl, 1983; Buttimer, 1996; Rundstrom and Deur, 1999; Kassam and The Wainwright Traditional Council, 2000).

Humanistic researchers are often exhorted to be "reflexive," meaning that they should reflect on their own position within research encounters, particularly in participant observation (Rose, 1997; Bondi, 2005). Drawing on my own experience, I believe that there are practical reasons why we, as researchers, may benefit from reflecting on our emotional responses to interpersonal interactions through participant observation. I truly enjoyed working with my collaborators, and I was drawn into and touched by the emotional lives of others. This is one example of how research collaborators' feelings impact on those of the researcher and vice versa (Bondi, 2003, 2005). Researchers' emotional experiences are therefore often shared by collaborators, and may include not only excitement or pleasure, but also fear, sadness, or anxiety. In this sense, researchers' emotions may become interpretive resources for how to interact sensitively with collaborators and develop rich understandings of each other in participant observation.

My participant observation in Barrow and Point Hope allowed me to reflect on my personal insights and interactions in producing tangible ethnography. I had the opportunity to travel with local families and friends on camping trips or to whaling camps. I also actively participated in what de Wit calls "seminal community events" (2003, p. 20) such as feasts and celebrations. It was then that I felt a deep sense of community identity, something ethnographic interviews alone could never accomplish. These experiences were important to my understanding of Iñupiat environmental associations and emotions as I could ask questions in context and share similar feelings.

My involvement with Iñupiaq livelihoods helped me understand their traditional and cultural contexts and idiom through their own frame of reference (Black, 1983; Fox, 2004), and I found it both a strength and a limitation to this research. The strength was my participation in everyday life. I processed *muktuk* with a family one afternoon,

savored *mikigaq* with them for dinner, and left with a friend for a seal hunt on the following morning; my neighbor often woke me up in the middle of my nap to have me help her make Eskimo ice cream (*akutuq*). There was hardly any time for me to be on my own, yet both Barrow and Point Hope became my home (Figure 2.6). As time passed by, I gradually and increasingly started feeling intimate and comfortable with the places and people. Indeed, some of my collaborators voluntarily adopted me as their family and crew member; they fed me and taught me so that I would have enough energy and wisdom to survive the harsh Arctic winter.

However, this sense of intimacy or proximity became one of my major concerns. I often asked myself if my distance with the community was appropriate or objective enough. Sometimes my personal relationships with families and friends created emotional struggles, and as a result, it put limitations on the research. For the most part, however, my personal, emotional, and physical relationships and involvement with a variety of events empowered my research. Additionally, it did not take long to realize how my Japanese appearance was favorably accepted by the local people due to its physical resemblance to themselves; most Iñupiaq villagers who saw me for the first time decided that I was an "Eskimo girl" from another North Slope village. Some even asked in Iñupiaq, "Who is your father?" Even after my identity was revealed, they adored me by calling me by my newly-given Iñupiaq names, feeding me whale meat, teaching me how to dance, correcting my Iñupiaq pronunciation, and dressing me up in an *attigluk* (traditional Iñupiaq snow dress). In terms of research, the experiences brought me closer to people and provided a way to make contacts for interviews or gave me an understanding of the nature of *cetaceousness*.



Figure 2.6—My Participant Observation. (20 October, 2005) With PK-13 Crew, one of my adopted Barrow families. PK-13 landed their first whale in forty years in May 2005, and Kiogak and Mae Ahgeak (the captain and his wife) graciously became my Iñupiaq parents.



Figure 2.7—Picking Salmon Berries near Point Hope, Alaska. (2 September, 2005). Berry picking is a crucial subsistence activity in the short growing season in early fall, when women pick berries on the tundra literally day and night. They talk about how recent warmer weather makes each growing season longer.

In general, my experience echoes Fox's (2004) description of her fieldwork in Clyde River and Baker Lake, Nunavut (Figure 2.7). As I developed a sense of trust and friendship with female members of the society, my engagement in the women's roles became a gateway to Iñupiaq subsistence activities. Since my first whale harvest experience in the spring of 2005, the female villagers had been patient with my clumsiness and kindly explained the customary process of sharing and collaborating with male villagers in honor of the whales. I quickly became an eager student of such Iñupiaq traditions. Simultaneously, with the strong support of hunters' wives and daughters, I was also able to become part of whaling and other hunting activities that may have otherwise remained inaccessible. Overall, I believe I was privileged with a broad perspective that bridged both male and female domains in the field.

STUDY SITE SELECTIONS

Of the eight communities in the NSB, Alaska—Anaktuvuk Pass, Atqasuk, Barrow, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Point Hope, Point Lay, and Wainwright (see Figure 1.4)—this study specifically examines the two traditional whaling communities of Barrow and Point Hope. There were a number of reasons why Barrow and Point Hope became the focus of my dissertation. My first visits to Barrow in 2004 and to Point Hope in 2005 went extremely well. Both community councils had approved my project first through the required Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol at the University of Oklahoma and then through NSB land grant licensing. In addition, community representatives of the Native Villages of Barrow and Point Hope, whaling captains' associations, and prominent individuals such as elders, whalers, and their wives also approved and welcomed my research. Fortunately, these groups and people made it clear that they had a strong

interest in and saw good potential for my project. The following criteria also assisted me in selecting Barrow and Point Hope as my host communities:

- Both Barrow and Point Hope are marine communities that have substantial access to bowhead whales, and thus are affected by climate change;
- Barrow and Point Hope are accessible by regular transportation networks, making travel possible within the limits of the project budget as well as time constraints;
- The populations in Barrow and Point Hope are both predominantly Iñupiaq, and both communities retain traditional whale-related events and whaling, though with distinctive regional differences;
- Point Hope, the second largest settlement in the NSB, retains a strong subsistence economy, and contrasts nicely with Barrow, the largest and most urbanized community in the NSB;
- Since Barrow holds the headquarters of community organizations such as the AEWC and the BWCA, there is potential for a long-term collaborative relationship with the organizations and community members;
- Although Barrow and Point Hope belong to the NSB, the two communities possess different climates: Point Hope is milder and enjoys more vegetation than Barrow due to its southerly location. Each village also has a unique culture, dialect, and history which I thought would also make for interesting comparisons and connections;
- The literature concerning Iñupiaq subsistence in Point Hope demonstrates a pattern connecting myths, whales, ceremonial and subsistence activities (Rainey, 1947; VanStone, 1962; Zumwalt, 1988; Foote, 1992; Lowenstein, 1992, 1993; Turner, 1993). This pattern points to linkages between human-whale relations

which culminate in one Point Hope origin story that associates a gigantic bowhead whale with the land.

Barrow, Alaska

Barrow, Alaska is located 340 miles (550 kilometers) north of the Arctic Circle facing the Chukchi Sea and the Beaufort Sea, 71°18′1″N, 156°44′9″W (see Figure 1. 4; Figures 2.8 and 2.9). Also known as Ukpeaġvik in Iñupiaq (meaning "the place where we hunt the snowy owls"), Barrow acts as the municipal government for northern Alaska. The geography of Barrow brings the bowhead whale migration near shore in both directions, which makes Barrow the only community that enjoys two whaling seasons annually in spring and fall. Although Barrow is a modern community, subsistence hunting, fishing, and whaling are still crucial to the local economy. Many residents who work full- or part-time continue to hunt and fish for much of their food (North Slope Borough, 2000). With more than 4,600 residents, approximately sixty percent Iñupiaq, the community is served by seven churches and has a large grocery and merchandise store and a few convenience stores. The village has a long history of collaboration between scientific researchers and native population, and with the assistance of BASC, it will remain our gateway to the Arctic.



Figure 2.8—Barrow, Alaska, Spring. (14 May, 2006)



Figure 2.9—Barrow, Alaska, Summer. (13 July, 2005)

Point Hope, Alaska

Point Hope (Figure 2.10) is one of the oldest continually inhabited communities in North America. It is the northwestern-most point of North America, 68.347° N, 166.808° W. With more than 800 residents, Point Hope, also known as *Tikiġaq* ("index finger"), is one of the most traditional whaling villages in Alaska (North Slope Borough, 2000). Iñupiat make up about ninety-one percent of the entire population (North Slope Borough, 2000). The native villagers are all whalers to various degrees and organized into two clan-related ceremonial organizations called *Qalgi*. The Point Hope settlement is located in the northwestern-most point of North America, approximately 370 miles (600 kilometers) southwest of Barrow. Today's Point Hope settlement was established in 1977 after experiencing continuous floods and erosion in its Old Town settlement by the Chukchi Sea. More than seventy percent of its original site is currently under water though the villagers' attachment to their old home remains strong, as Chapter V of this study shows.

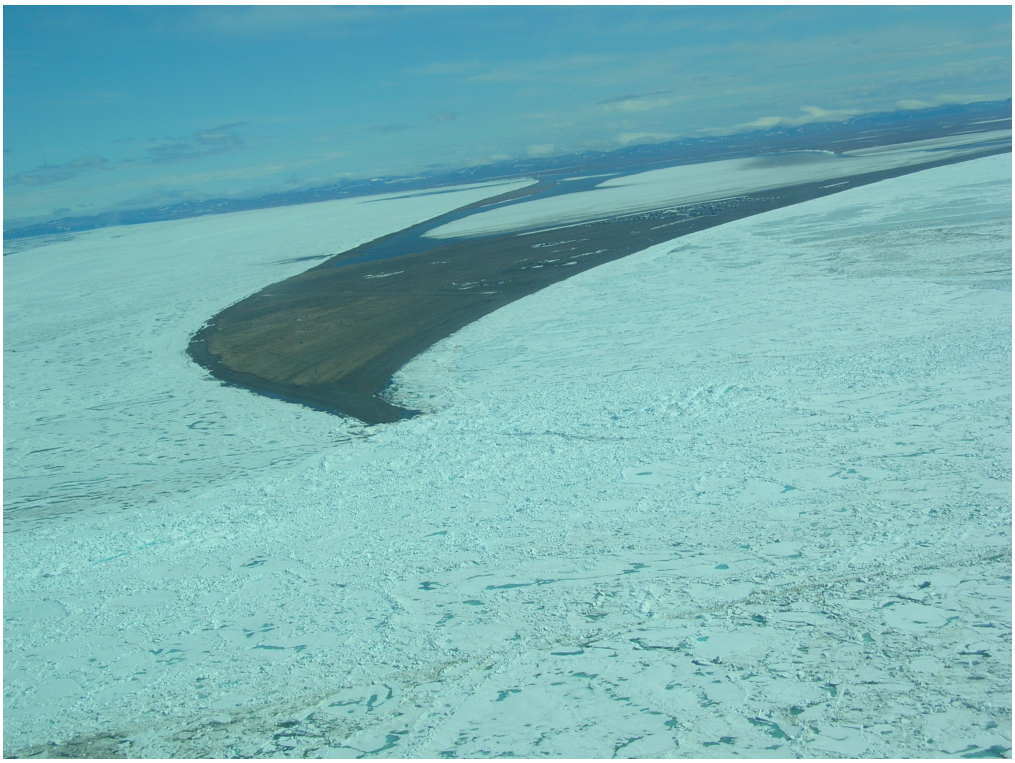


Figure 2.10—Point Hope, Alaska. (17 June, 2006) The Tikiġaq Peninsula emerged as the land ice melted and the sea ice thinned.

The land that is said to have once been a whale is now incorporated into the State of Alaska as a political subdivision called the North Slope Borough. The borough represents the Iñupiat while the Iñupiat represent the bowhead whale. The series of movements and campaigns to keep *cetaceousness* intact gave birth to the indigenous organizations, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) and the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) in the second half of the twentieth century. In the following chapter, I describe how the formerly village-based Iñupiaq peoples collectively stood up from the NSB as the People of the Whales.

CHAPTER III
WHALING PEOPLES AND POLITICS

Current expressions of Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* reflect, in part, three decades of political mobilization among indigenous peoples of the Arctic to fend off unwanted "southern" intrusions, to protect the environment, to retain their homeland, and to defend their traditional whaling rights. For the Iñupiat, political activism has helped foster a pan-Iñupiaq identity that has connected disparate communities and reinvigorated cultural traditions among the People of the Whales.

Until the 1970s, Iñupiaq groups had been organized only at the village level. This meant that villagers identified themselves first as *Tikiġaqmiut* (the Point Hopers), *Ukpeaġvikmiut* (the Barrowites) or members of other village affiliations before they called themselves Iñupiat. Unlike the Inuit, their neighbors in Nunavut, the Iñupiaq villagers of northern Alaska had been organizing their identities based on village affiliations since the early nineteenth century. Ernest S. Burch (1998) refers to these entities as land-based "nations" at the hunter-gatherer level of complexity. This difference distinguishes the Iñupiaq tradition from the example of Nunavut in which the Inuit were linked to broader regional identities formed by their membership in bands up to the 1960s (Légaré, 2002).

Among Iñupiaq villages, collective organization and notions of a broader indigenous identity and nation took shape. In the 1970s, a loose federation of villages gave way to three prominent indigenous organizations: the North Slope Borough (NSB)[1]—the first home-rule government in Alaska (1972); the Inuit Circumpolar

[1] Although the North Slope Borough is a subdivision of the state of Alaska, Eben Hobson, Sr., visionary elder and the leader of the Iñupiaq community, initiated the formation of the borough. Hopson defined the primary goal of the borough as the promotion of indigenous interests with the rise

Conference (ICC)—a pan-Arctic indigenous peoples' organization (1977); and, most important for this study, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) (1977).[2] The AEWC organizes representatives of Iñupiat and neighboring Yup'ik whalers to negotiate with the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The activities of the AEWC have been particularly important in connecting isolated Alaskan villages and organizing them around political and environmental issues associated with bowhead whaling and environmental change. While Iñupiat Arctic survival attests to a profound relationship with whales, current expressions of *cetaceousness* are also reflected in political efforts to protect whaling rights that have rejuvenated an Iñupiaq cultural identity as the People of the Whales.

In this chapter, I describe the recent political roots of contemporary Iñupiaq identity, which also includes emotional reactions to outside influences. I show how politics, ethnic sentiments, identity, and whaling rights have become entangled and tied to globalization. I locate the origins of Arctic whaling struggles in the ongoing conflict between whaling cultures and maritime nations on the one hand, and the southern and urban peoples and organizations I collectively call "whale lovers" on the other hand. After summarizing the commercial origins of this conflict, I examine the reactionary impositions of the IWC and the alternative politics of the newly organized Arctic peoples. This development is also reflected in the revival of *Kivġiq*, an inter-communal whale feast hosted by the Iñupiaq whalers. I end with a brief discussion of how Arctic

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of indigenous identity, which was to be accompanied by the same basic services enjoyed by other Americans (Eben Hopson Memorial Archives, 2007).

[2] Southern use of the term "Eskimo" often conjures up negative connotations and ethnic stereotypes. Among the people of the western Arctic, however, this term signifies the wholeness of all northern peoples: the Iñupiat, Inuit, Yup'ik, and Greenlandic Inuit.

organizations, especially the ICC and the AEWC, are building on their past strengths to confront the environmental problems associated with global warming. The Iñupiaq people realize that their current problems are different than those of the past, but they also understand that as long as there are bowhead whales they can subsist and thrive, and this is their goal.

WHALING PEOPLES

The reciprocal relationship between people and whales is ancient. Since the beginning of sea travel, whales have provided people with meat, oil, and a variety of useful body parts. With more than eighty different species of whales roaming throughout seventy percent of the earth's surface, whales have nourished maritime cultures materially and spiritually for millennia. By incorporating whales into their cultural heritage, the boundaries between whales, land, and humans have blurred among these peoples. In this way, reciprocal relations of kinship and respect blend with sustenance needs to create enduring bonds that transcend a simple utilitarian or one-way relationship.

Whales can become a powerful symbol of nationhood, sovereignty, and cultural identity. Whales have played this role historically among the traditional whaling nations of Iceland, Norway, and Japan. In this sense, whaling and its associated cultural traditions interact with larger political processes of ethnic or national identity. In turn, many whaling peoples also consider whaling as a means to keep the ocean healthy. The recent unilateral resumption of whaling in Iceland, for example, was considered necessary for the protection of vital stocks of fish consumed by increasing whale populations (Alvarez, 2003). Traditional whaling communities enhance their reciprocal relationship with whales by maintaining rules for the use of body parts to retain ethical relations (Kalland,

1993).

Many indigenous worldviews also assign important roles to whales: for the Maori of New Zealand, whales originated in the sky. For the Aborigines of Australia, the sacred whale connects earth, air, fire, and water (Billinghurst, 2000). For the Ainu of northern Japan, many landscape features were once whales (Sarashina, 2003). To these whaling peoples, whaling is a social tradition and a foundation of culture.

The origin of whaling as a commercial industry began approximately in the eleventh century when Basque fishermen started hunting the northern Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) in the Bay of Biscay (Ellis, 1998). Dutch and British whalers soon followed this commercial practice. Later, Euro-Americans, Norwegians, and many other nationalities began crowding the oceans and seas with gigantic whaling vessels with the intent to make a profit (Ellis, 1998). Excessive whaling was a predictable result and, by the 1970s, whale populations were almost destroyed.

This tragic history gave birth to a new generation of people in the last quarter of the twentieth century: whale lovers. Whale lovers are mostly urban residents residing south of the Arctic Circle. For these people, a love of whales is characterized by a strong affection for warm-blooded, docile, and intelligent creatures typified in Disney's *Free Willy* movies. This affection for whales makes whales akin to "pets" rather than fellow creatures of the earth. This type of emotive relationship is not reciprocal but rather attests to humanity's dominant place as master of the universe (Tuan, 1984; Haraway, 2003). Through this process of mental domestication, whales have become a world-famous icon of endangered nature that we must now protect. The common mantra "Save the whales," however, does not promote a new ethical relationship with animals. Instead, it has turned whales into commodified pets in the name of conservation (Kalland, 1993).

Urban whale-loving has led to anti-whaling organizations seeking to promote alternative forms of whale "consumption." This development came to a head in the summer of 1999 along the Olympic Peninsula in Washington. Seeking to revitalize their cultural traditions, Makah whalers resumed their first gray whale hunt off Neah Bay in more than seventy years. Predictably the event turned into a media circus. Whalers were confronted by an angry public, a hostile media, and anti-whaling groups (Sullivan, 2000). Although the gray whale was no longer endangered, the rifle-toting Makah came to symbolize all that was wrong with human-whale relations as espoused by whale lovers (Erikson, 1999; Sullivan, 2000).

Whale lovers have sought to replace the whale hunt with whale-watching, ecotourism, and ethnic tourism. Whales, they argue, can still be "used sustainably" by indigenous people. One environmentalist even suggested that the Makah—and by extension all indigenous whalers—could sustain their cultural traditions by simply touching whales as if they were "count[ing] coup" (Erikson, 1999, p. 563).[3] In this proposal, the Makah, the gray whales, and traditional Makah-whale relations would all be New Age commodities open to the highest bidder (Erikson, 1999; Hatch, 1999).

The ideas of whale lovers collide with those of indigenous whalers. While respect for whales creates some common ground among the two groups, it does not lead to common solutions or understandings. Although whale watching has the potential to increase tribal revenues, it would impoverish traditional spirituality nourished by the

[3] Counting coup is a tradition of Plains tribes, which in this case was stereotypically applied to the Makah, a Northwest coast tribe. To count a coup, a horse-riding warrior would strike the body of the enemy with a coup stick, and then return home triumphantly. The important issue here is that the stick only touches the enemy and the action involves no killing. Some environmentalists and tourists alike think this is an appropriate substitute for the Makah tradition.

social nature of the whale hunt and its associated cultural traditions of respect. As the following chapters of this dissertation will show, the social performance of respect for whales and the act of hunting them *is* cultural survival. There can be no substitute determined by outsiders. To eliminate the whale hunt for the voyeuristic pleasure of wealthy tourists would, as indigenous whalers aptly point out, destroy the indigenous Peoples of the Whales.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Southern modernity followed the migration path of the bowhead whales into the Arctic in the mid-nineteenth century. Sailing the *Superior* in 1848, Thomas W. Roys brought the first major changes to the shores of Alaska. By the 1850s, approximately 200 commercial whaling vessels were working the north Alaskan coast. The commercial whalers established shore stations at existing Iñupiaq whaling communities and endowed them with English names such as Wales (*Kingigin*), Point Hope (*Tikiġaq*), and Barrow (*Ukpeaġvik*). After the initial "discovery" of abundant bowhead whales, commercial whalers removed some 18,000 whales from the Arctic Ocean over the following seventy years (Ellis, 1998). This led to a drastic decrease in the bowhead population, and by the 1920s, only 1,000 or so remained (Huntington, 1992).[4]

The commodification of bowhead whales quickly linked the modern, capitalist economy of the South with the peoples and resources of the North (Shoemaker, 2005). In

[4] Once a whale was caught, it was commodified with its blubber being rendered into whale oil on the spot and the baleen being crafted into manufacturing goods, until the spring steel replaced it in the 1920s (Huntington, 1992). Whale oil was used to lubricate fine watches and other intricacies in art. Bowhead baleen was highly valued in European nations, as well as in the United States, as a precursor to plastic, and mainly used in corsets and umbrellas for high fashion.

the process, Iñupiaq men traded in their native *umiak*, or seal skin, boats for employment as crew members, harpooners, flensers, and laborers at the shore stations. New employment opportunities spurred the migration of inland Iñupiat to the coast. The introduction of a wage-labor economy enabled the Iñupiat to purchase rifles, iron tools, cloth, a variety of imported foods, liquors, and tobacco. The Iñupiat traditional reliance on whales decreased in direct proportion to their new dependency on the whale traders and their goods and technologies (Huntington, 1992; Burch, 1998; Freeman, et al., 1998). By the mid-twentieth century firearms and explosive harpoons had almost totally replaced traditional harpoons and lances (Freeman et al., 1998). These changes had emerged with alcoholism and disease, and the arrival of missionaries, western schooling, and a Christian ban on native ceremonies.

Jack Hadley traveled to the northern Bering Sea on a whaling vessel in the early twentieth century and recorded the shift in Iñupiaq lifeways. "The Eskimo," he wrote, "has almost completely adopted [the commercial whaler's] methods and materials … whatever the native sees the white man do he must do also" (1915, p. 920). For Hadley, the white man's Westernization produced the favorable outcome of consumerism.

> [The advent of commercial whaling] was the beginning of the end of [the Iñupiat] devil business and the old prehistoric style of whaling … the Eskimos began to adopt the white man's guns and combs and to acquire a taste for the luxuries of civilization. (1915, p. 920)

In this commonly-held view, commercial whaling "civilized" the Iñupiat by ending their traditional whaling and its associated "devil business." But the market was changing and Hadley's paternalistic racism proved nearly prophetic: "The whaling industry is almost a

thing of the past. The present market and the price of bone for either white man or Eskimo and the closed season on fur have sealed the fate of the Arctic whaler" (Hadley, 1915, p. 921). As the bowhead whale populations declined precipitously, there was a corresponding reduction in the demand for whale oil and body parts in southern markets.

After the departure of commercial whalers from the Alaskan coasts, the Iñupiat resumed their traditional whaling from the *umiak*—a multiple-person wooden boat wrapped with bearded seal skins. To survive, the Iñupiat combined the advantages of traditional practices with the benefits of modern technology. Forced to shed many southern influences and dependencies, the Iñupiat rediscovered and revalidated their survival experiences and traditional practices. Describing the *umiak*, Ben Nageak of Barrow sheds light on this important social process:

> Many people now have modern boats with motors, but the *umiak* is the best boat for whaling. No technology can replace it. It is light and easy to carry over ice ridges. We paddle the *umiak* and it is quiet. The color of the bleached out *ugruk* [bearded seals] skin blends in with sea ice. The *umiak* doesn't scare the whales, and it is the only boat we still use in the spring hunt. (8 August, 2005)

The People of the Whales applied similar thinking when they filled out their whaling kit with handheld VHF radios, snowmobiles, radio-equipped floats, and GPS receivers. Survival is a disciplined teacher, requiring adaptation in blending and balancing two worlds; as in the creation of new traditions, so too in a new era of political survival.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND THE IÑUPIAQ RESPONSE

International whaling first became a controversial issue in 1946 when forty-two whaling nations, including the United States, signed the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW). As part of the convention, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was established as the inter-governmental body empowered to regulate whaling. Since its inception, the IWC has met annually to adopt regulations on catch limits, institute whaling methods, and establish protected areas.

Originally a fourteen member subcommittee could adopt regulations on the basis of a three-quarters majority vote. Following on the heels of the Progressive movement in natural resource management, the Commission was motivated by the excesses of commercial whaling and sought to manage whales in a more economically rational way. They considered the bowhead, blue, fin, gray, humpback, and minke whales to be near extinction and sought their protection. The IWC's stance helped those same whales to be listed in the U. S. Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, developments that had widespread implications for indigenous whalers.

The original mandate of the IWC—to promote and maintain whale stocks as a common resource for productive whaling—changed after the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment at Stockholm. Tied to the formation and activism of whale lovers and their organizations discussed earlier, the IWC turned into a global police force of the ocean and quickly adopted a five-year moratorium on commercial whaling. From this point on, the IWC has persistently challenged the rights of whaling nations, including indigenous whalers. Although "aboriginal whaling" was originally exempted from IWC regulations of 1972, whale lovers did not distinguish between commercial practices and those of indigenous peoples (Freeman et al., 1998). In this way,

global activism against whaling inspired the IWC to ban even aboriginal whaling in 1977. In the process they singled out the Iñupiat, claiming that "the Eskimos were killing too many bowheads" (Boeri, 1983, p. 104). To add insult to injury, Iñupiaq whalers were not informed of the decision until after it was made, effectively precluding any future cooperation (Boeri, 1983; Hess, 1999; Freeman, et al., 1998).

Central to the IWC-imposed ban and the frustration of the Iñupiat whalers was a profound disagreement about the size of the actual population of bowhead whales. Eugene Brower, Sr., President of the Barrow Whaling Captains' Association (BWCA) describes the uncertainty at the time:

> No one knew how many bowheads there were. The population estimation was never the same, and ranged from a few hundred to three thousand … no one had ever actually done a scientific count then … nevertheless, the IWC was worried that the bowhead population was nearing extinction. (18 August, 2005)

This uncertainty of the IWC was not held by indigenous whalers. Harry Brower, Jr., a Barrow whaling captain, emphasizes this point:

> When the IWC imposed its ban on our bowhead whale subsistence hunt in July of 1977, U. S. scientists thought that our bowhead whale population had only 600 to 1,800 animals. If our elders had been asked, they would have informed the IWC that there were at least 4,000 bowhead whales in the population at the time, and that the population was healthy and growing. They also would have explained how they knew this through their traditional knowledge, which comes from generations of first-hand experience surviving in the Arctic. (12 July, 2006)

Despite a lack of data, the IWC and other outside political bodies restricted what the

Iñupiat took to be their inherent right—the right to unite a physical whale hunt with a cultural ethics of reciprocity. The impositions of global governance and globalization more generally inspired the peoples of the whales to unite politically.

The decade of the 1970s marked a watershed in Arctic politics, especially among the Iñupiat. In 1972, the seven Iñupiaq villages north of the Brooks Range were bound together in the governing institution of the NSB.[5] Through this incorporation, the Iñupiat confronted a new set of social and environmental problems associated with pollution, oil exploration, and continued outside interference. As problems grew, Eben Hopson, Sr., the first NSB mayor, invited the representatives of the Yup'ik, the Canadian Inuit, and the Greenlandic Inuit to Barrow in June 1977 to discuss their common concerns—preservation of the Arctic environment and indigenous cultural self-determination. In retrospect, this meeting helped stimulate a pan-Arctic indigenous identity that spawned political institutions that successfully confronted the IWC.

The 1977 assembly became the origin of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC). Today, the ICC general assembly meets every four years. The organization unifies over 160,000 people across the Arctic in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Russia. It helps promote a constructive dialogue among the Arctic peoples themselves— something they had never done before—and provides a platform for a unified voice to be heard in the non-native South. As an Iñupiaq elder from Barrow, Hopson felt the urgency to confirm the Iñupiat circumpolar kinship with other northern peoples to protect their hunting rights, resources, and Arctic homeland (George Ahmaogak, Sr., 20 September, 2005). The term "Inuit" was adopted for the conference title as an adjective to collectively represent the

[5] Currently there are eight villages in the North Slope Borough, but Atqasuk (population 203) had not been established until 1982. There were just seven communities in the NSB in 1972.

circumpolar indigenous identities. While the peoples have been divided into several Arctic nations, the peoples of the North share a common ancestry, appreciation of subsistence from the land and ocean, and environmental knowledge.

The IWC bowhead prohibition against indigenous whaling occured in the NSB in July 1977, one month after the ICC had first met. Just as northern whaling communities were redefining their identity beyond ethnic boundaries, an outside force pushed them even closer together. As a witness of the 1977 bowhead whaling ban, Jack Schaefer of Point Hope states: "We survive on the animals. If we lose animals or lose access to them, we are gone. We are wiped out. And the views of outsiders and others, it may be considered as an ethnic cleansing" (15 August, 2005). To take back the powers that they had traditionally exercised, representatives from whaling communities decided to organize. Building on the precedent of the NSB and the ICC, Iñupiat and Yup'ik whaling captains and their crew members from the ten whaling communities—Gambell, Savoonga, Wales, Little Diomede, Kivalina, Point Hope, Wainwright, Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Kaktovik—got together in August 1977 and founded the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC).[6] The AEWC's mission reflects native calls to protect and enhance indigenous cultures, traditions, and activities associated with bowhead whales and whaling. Composed of locally elected commissioners from each of the ten Alaskan whaling villages, the AEWC's major task is to negotiate with non-indigenous organizations, primarily the United States federal government and the IWC, about management plans in general and the quota system in particular. Not surprisingly,

[6] While the NSB has eight Iñupiat communities, only coastal communities of the Borough participate in this organization. For this reason, the inland and bay area communities such as Atqasuk, Point Lay, and Anaktuvuk Pass are not part of this list.

founding members of the Whaling Commission were also involved in the ICC assembly that was held two months prior. In this way, the ICC and the AEWC originally shared the common goal of cultural survival and retention of whaling as crucial dimensions of native sovereignty.

With the collaboration and support of the ICC and the NSB, the AEWC proved that the bowhead whale populations were indeed on the rise. In 1981, the organization signed an agreement with the U. S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that delegated the management authority of bowhead whales to the AEWC. This agreement also allowed the AEWC to supervise the bowhead hunt without the presence of federal agents (Freeman et al., 1998). In less than a decade after the IWC became the police force of the ocean, Arctic whalers had successfully defended their interests. Successful political activism helped re-establish a reciprocal relationship with the whales that sustain them: the long history of *cetaceousness* had taken a new turn.

The AEWC helped validate traditional knowledge and strengthened the link between politics and cultural identity. Through the AEWC, traditional whalers now sponsor scientific studies of bowheads in order to engage with outsider idioms such as the bowhead quota. The quota system was introduced as a middle ground between the IWC and the AEWC. The agreement sets limits on the number of whales that can be hunted in a five-year block. For example, up to 280 whales could be landed between 2003 and 2007 (International Whaling Commission, 2004). For each of these years, the number of bowhead whales struck could not exceed sixty-seven, but any unused portion of the quota could be carried forward to subsequent years. Within the quota of sixty-seven whales per year, the AEWC allocates the number of whales that can be harvested by each whaling community, such as twenty-two whales for Barrow and nine whales for Point Hope

annually during the five-year block period. Currently the bowhead population is estimated at 80,000 and increasing. For the next block period of 2008-2012, the AEWC and the NSB successfully renewed the quota in the upcoming IWC meeting that was held in Anchorage, Alaska in May 2007. For Harry Brower, Jr., Chair of the AEWC, the success of the group has been founded upon their traditional culture:

> In addition to the AEWC's resource management successes, through our quota battles at the IWC, we also have learned how to blend western science with our traditional knowledge to better understand our natural world. Through the use of western science's research technique and analysis, informed by our traditional knowledge, the world now knows more about our bowhead whales than any other whale on earth. (12 July, 2006)

The Iñupiat reinvigorated their identity as the People of the Whales by effectively organizing and communicating aspects of their *cetaceousness* to outsiders.

In addition to the new political turn of Iñupiaq whaling, traditional events also serve as an emblem of cultural identity. Along with the formation and the development of the AEWC, there was another form of self-representation—*Kiġviq*—a revived feast that renews a whaling year. Otherwise known as the Inviting-In feast (Hawkes, 1914) or the Messenger's Feast (Riccio, 1993; 2003), *Kiġviq* now takes place in Barrow in February every other year. It is a three-day gift-exchange feast that culminates with a traditional drum dance. *Kivġiq*'s inter-communal nature also nurtures the alliance between the NSB Iñupiaq villages and the Yup'ik villages, the two ethnic groups of the AEWC. The AEWC is in fact one of the sponsors of the event, and IWC representatives are also invited to the feast (Ray Koonuk, 22 July, 2005). Both Iñupiat and Yup'ik cultures share common appreciation of their land and whales in addition to a common message of the

whale feast. The traditional *Kiġviq* as described by elders was a special event bringing together people from various village locations to places (Riccio, 1993). After this feast, the preparation for the upcoming whaling season officially begins (Ronald Brower, Sr., 20 November, 2004).

The event was revitalized after seventy-four years of interruption due to the impact of missionary pressures. In the past, it was held every few years; when enough food and gifts had been amassed. Whaling captains sent runners to other communities inviting them to share the bounties. Once the guests arrived, they exchanged all kinds of gifts including food, especially whale and caribou, to connect the sea and the land. Exchanged wealth also included songs and dances acquired from the whales and animals. Through drum dance performance, the whales also touched the heart of the inland people (Beverly Hugo, 20 November, 2004).

In 1988, at the revival, the nature of the feast was adjusted to the current globalization and the development of the Iñupiaq identity. "It's all about whaling," said George Ahmaogak, Sr., the former NSB mayor who originally brought back this tradition in 1988. The primary purpose of this resurrection was to return to the traditional Iñupiaq values to combat recent environmental and social problems. The resurrection of the event indicates how the social function of Iñupiat tradition has changed more than its form—it is now more secularized and more invested with political meanings.

Kivġiq has become a way to communicate with other cultural groups and have the Iñupiat to reconfirm their pride as the People of the Whales. The successful whaling captains who caught whales in the previous year are the sponsors of the event. As part of the whaling calendar, the event also offers the opportunity to strengthen teamwork among whaling crews for successful hunts in the upcoming season. The most recent feast was

held in Barrow in February 2007, comprising many groups of the North—all eight North Slope Borough villages and the Yup'ik, interior tribes of Alaska, the Inuit from Nunavut, Canada, and the Chukotkan people from Siberia. As with most events of the People of the Whales, music and dance became vehicles to strengthen human emotions and associations with the whales, the strong metaphor of the Iñupiat land. I revisit and elaborate this link between cultural performance and *cetaceousness* in Chapter VI.

MUKTUK POLITICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

For the Iñupiat, cultural survival relies upon the right to hunt whales. For now their cultural identity has been secured by political organizations that successfully defended this right. In the process, Iñupiaq culture and identity necessarily became entwined with politics. I use the phrase *muktuk* politics to capture the cultural importance of this entanglement and to link its significance to the notions of *cetaceousness* that I develop in the remainder of this study. *Muktuk* is an Iñupiaq word that means whale blubber or the underlying layer of fat below the skin (Figure 3.1). It is a unique food among circumpolar peoples—and all prominent whaling nations—and is an essential element of their long-term survival.[7] The cultural importance of *muktuk* as a symbol of indigenous identity was a topic frequently broached by my Iñupiaq friends. *Muktuk* was

[7] *Muktuk* is indispensable for Iñupiat survival as it cleans blood vessels and protects the people against scurvy with abundant vitamins A and C, thiamin, riboflavin, and niacin (Freeman, et al., 1998). *Muktuk* refers to the outer covering of whale skin and underlying fatty tissue, which is extremely rich in vitamin C. The word is also spelled *muctuc* (Brower, 1994), *maktak* (Blackman, 1989; Chance, 1990; Hess 1999; Wohlforth, 2004), or *mattak* (Freeman et al. , 1998). My study adopts *muktuk* (Ellis, 1998; Lynge, 1992; Reimer, 1999), as this spelling seems the closest to the Iñupiat pronunciation.

often used as a metaphor for cultural survival but also an acknowledgement of pride in the whaling rights now well-established. In this way, my interviews and ethnography of the twenty-first century that sought to address the impacts of climate change on Iñupiat *cetaceousness* cannot be easily disassociated from the *muktuk* politics that coalesced at the end of the twentieth century.



Figure 3.1—Bowhead Whale *Muktuk*. (20 June, 2005) *Muktuk* taken from an ice cellar and chopped into pieces for community distribution. Barrow, Alaska.

Any clear division between a symbolic meaning of *muktuk* and the People of the Whales' cultural identity dissolves in discussion. Beverly Hugo of Barrow put it this way, "*Muktuk* is the source of our power and the symbol of unity within ourselves to retain our whales" (20 June, 2006). For Jeslie Kaleak, Sr. of Barrow, the bowhead whales are the "only animals that keep us strong as the real Iñupiat" (10 September, 2005). When I confronted Jeslie's wife Julia with the question if there could be "life without *muktuk*?" her answer was an emphatic "Unthinkable." For Julia, "Whaling brings healings,

blessings, unity, and renewal. When whales come to us, we tend to forget anxieties and problems in life. Everyone gets together to help process the whale properly and enjoy sharing *muktuk*" (20 July, 2005) (Figure 3.2). She knows this to be true because when access to *muktuk* declined, social problems such as mutual distrust, alcoholism, domestic violence, drug abuse, and suicides all increased (20 July, 2005). For the Iñupiat, to consume *muktuk* is to be whole, to be one with the whale, and there can be no substitute. Fannie Akpik of Barrow made this clear when whale lovers sought to appease her following the 1977 ban on bowhead whaling: the government "… came to this village one day and distributed twenty-five pounds of beef and cheese per household." As she explained, such tokens could never replace *muktuk*:

> We can't grow anything up here, but we sure have the rich sea. The sea is our garden, but they tried to take it and whales away from us altogether. We couldn't become the People of the Cows. When they tried to take the whales from us, our youth started roaming around at night … our elders became sick, alcoholism and suicide rates went up, everything started falling apart. (10 July, 2005)

Emma Kinneeveauk, village coordinator of Point Hope and a whaler's wife, also clarifies the importance of the whales to her people: "Our way of life is too important for us before we think of any money. There is no price you could pay for seeing my grandparents catch and harvest how many whales. I'd never ask for dollar amount to trade that in" (15 November, 2006). As a symbol of Iñupiat sustenance and survival, it is not surprising that the Iñupiat rely on a *muktuk* politics to confront the uncertainty of climate change.



Figure 3.2—Whale at Dinner. (15 June, 2005) The PK-13 Crew of Barrow enjoying *muktuk* over dinner.

Iñupiat responses to climatic change are rooted in a *muktuk* politics of information that seeks to link *cetaceousness*, whaling, and environmental rights to human rights. Specifically, the ICC and the AEWC have begun working collaboratively to draw international attention to the human plight of the Arctic region and, as Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Chair of the ICC, put it, to put "a human face on the global warming map" (10 July, 2006). On December 7 of 2005, Mrs. Watt-Cloutier, as Chair of the ICC, submitted a petition supported by testimony from sixty-three Iñupiat and Inuit from northern Alaska and Canada to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an important agency of the Organization of American States. The petition focused on the violations of human rights due to the impacts of global warming. During the 2006 ICC convention held in Barrow, Mrs. Watt-Cloutier used her time on the climate change panel

to show that human-induced global warming violated fundamental Iñupiat human rights, including health, physical integrity, security, subsistence access, and cultural well-being (10 July, 2006). The strategic turn to human rights from whaling rights seeks to force corrective measures to combat global warming in industrialized countries that have not signed the Kyoto Protocol, particularly the United States.

Despite some headway with the Inter-American court case, the Iñupiat continue to struggle to give global warming its first human face. Collaborating with the NSB Department of Wildlife Management, the AEWC annually provides Arctic thoughts and voices on climate and environmental changes as observed by Iñupiaq whalers. These messages are directed to non-Arctic regions in hopes of drawing attention to the Iñupiat homeland and *cetaceousness*. These reports typically reveal difficult hunting conditions and declining whale hunt efficiencies due to persistent ice-choked leads, dangerous ice conditions, strong ocean currents and wind directions, all of which influence the success of the bowhead hunt (Suydam et al., 1993, 1996, 2003, 2006). This new form of *muktuk* politics seeks to bring the cultural plight of the Iñupiaq people to a wider audience—including whale lovers—but it relies on more recent political experiences. As Harry Brower, Jr. explains, "Our fight to keep the IWC from taking our bowhead whale away from us has taught us some very important lessons that we can use as we face global warming and [other] industrial threats" such as offshore oil and gas development (12 July, 2006). Using their own *cetaceousness* to raise awareness about themselves and bowhead whales, the Iñupiat seek to extend their reciprocal relationship into the future to ensure the traditions of their past.

CHAPTER IV
AĠVIQSIUQ—WHALE HUNT

My first hunting experience with an Iñupiaq took place on the sea ice offshore from Barrow. After a half-hour bumpy snowmobile ride over chipped ridges, Aku and I stood at the edge of open water. It was early April when we went to scout the sea ice to seek a lead. The spring whaling time was getting near. With a wind chill of twenty below zero Celsius, cold air brutally bit my eyeballs, nose, ears, lips, and lungs all in one sharp bite. The lead was open. As soon as he glanced at the ice and the sea, Aku quietly grabbed his rifle from my back, kneeled down to the ice and started scratching the ice with a knife. "Are you trying to cut ice cubes for an *iglu*?" I asked, shivering in the wind, stomping on the ice relentlessly. Ignoring my naïveté, Aku's eyes focused sternly on the open water. Then he lay on the surface of the sea ice on his right side, gesturing to me to follow him. Completely baffled, I tried to resist: "*Naumi*, *alappaa*! (No way, it's cold!)" "Shh, *ugruk* (a bearded seal) is out there!" Almost magically the scratching sound Aku made on the ice seemed to have enchanted the seal. Although the seal was barely visible to my untrained eyes, the cold tense air vibrantly transmitted the heightened curiosity of the animal. The seal's round black head popped up from the calm dark water several times, and it gradually swam closer to our range. Framed by his snow white parka and lying flat, Aku blended in with the ice perfectly. Keeping his intense gaze on the approaching black silhouette, Aku set his rifle level on the animal's head. Everything went still and frozen, even the moment itself. The air was intensely charged until he finally fired the rifle. On the edge of the frozen sea, I heard Aku's low hissing voice, "We got him." Sure enough, the seal was a full-grown male with a big dark face, nearly seven feet (two meters) long. Its round body was sleek, almost shiny, and appeared surreal to

me. As we struggled to haul the huge body onto the ice, Aku pointed to the ocean once again and whispered—"Look it! Down the lead. The whales are already here." First I saw a black, submarine-like shadow coming up from beneath the water surface. The huge black shadow was approaching us and rose to breathe. Its immense head then breached and blew off a misty spray from its blowhole. *Whooooosh*! The whale showered us with the moisture in its exhalation. Then a smaller head broke the surface and immediately went down under the water. "She has a baby!" The mother and the calf rolled together to the surface once again and breathed several times in succession. Then they arched their backs and disappeared into the water—at least, that was what I saw. "Watch out for your feet!" Aku laid his eyes on the ice where we stood side by side. "They may be under this ice right now. Their heads are so big and strong, and they can burst this ice upright if they want." My initial fear quickly transformed itself into tremendous excitement. My heart was pounding. I was awestruck by the encounter. The whaling time was already here.

In contrast to my excitement, however, I soon realized the silence of Aku. Pulling the lifeless yet heavy seal to the sled efficiently, he said in haste, "You see, they [whales] are arriving in Barrow much earlier now. It couldn't have been this early in the spring when a mamma whale comes up with her baby!" "Why are they in such a hurry now?" I asked. "*Atchu* (I don't know). Isn't that what you study? Wasn't it global warming?" Aku's reply was curt because he was exasperated. He then abruptly started the snowmobile engine and eyed me to hop on. "There's no time to lose," he said.

In this chapter, I combine my descriptions and Iñupiat voices to unfold one facet of Iñupiaq *cetaceousness*, the whale hunt (*aġviksiuq*). While it connects Iñupiat and whales most closely in a physical setting, recent shifts in hunting practices present just one example of Iñupiaq adaptation to their world in transition. Climate change inevitably

influences the rest of the whaling cycle at both social and cultural levels. In order to set up a basis for the following chapters that discuss Iñupiat cultural responses, I provide a descriptive portrayal of a living culture informed by Iñupiat emotions and expressions. I begin with explanations of the social roles of whaling crews, the whaling system, and the whale hunt as a vital component of the Iñupiaq calendar. I incorporate the voices of whalers and villagers who literally live climate change . In doing so, I examine how the whale and the Iñupiat compliment each other to complete the cycle of life despite the recent disruptions of the marine ecosystem, sea ice conditions, and *cetaceousness*. My goal is to create a sensitive description of a human livelihood entwined with the life and death of the bowhead whale, and I reveal some of the implications of a variety of reactions to problems experienced in recent whaling seasons. These responses illustrate that shifts in whaling practices do not mean a loss of culture, but rather a growth of cultural identity and resilience.

Oftentimes elders say that the Iñupiat have been whaling since the time immemorial. Whaling tradition, however, had never been static although the people's deep respect for the animal may have stayed intact. As Richard Glenn, whaling captain and the Vice President of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation stated, Iñupiat subsistence is built on change, and Iñupiaq life has been based on their observation of the world, experiences with animals and natural phenomena (April 21, 2005); once something goes wrong, the people never hesitate to experiment with different techniques, occasional modifications of their tools, and elaborate on mutual information exchange to engage in the survival process. Especially in the Arctic, change and continuity are closely interrelated, and often coping with change facilitates deeper human-environment interactions. "And, we all learn this [survival through adaptation] from the whale," says

George Kingik (20 August, 2005). Certainly, Iñupiat always guided me through their Arctic home and helped me understand how the whale connects the Arctic lives, the sea, land, animals, and humans.

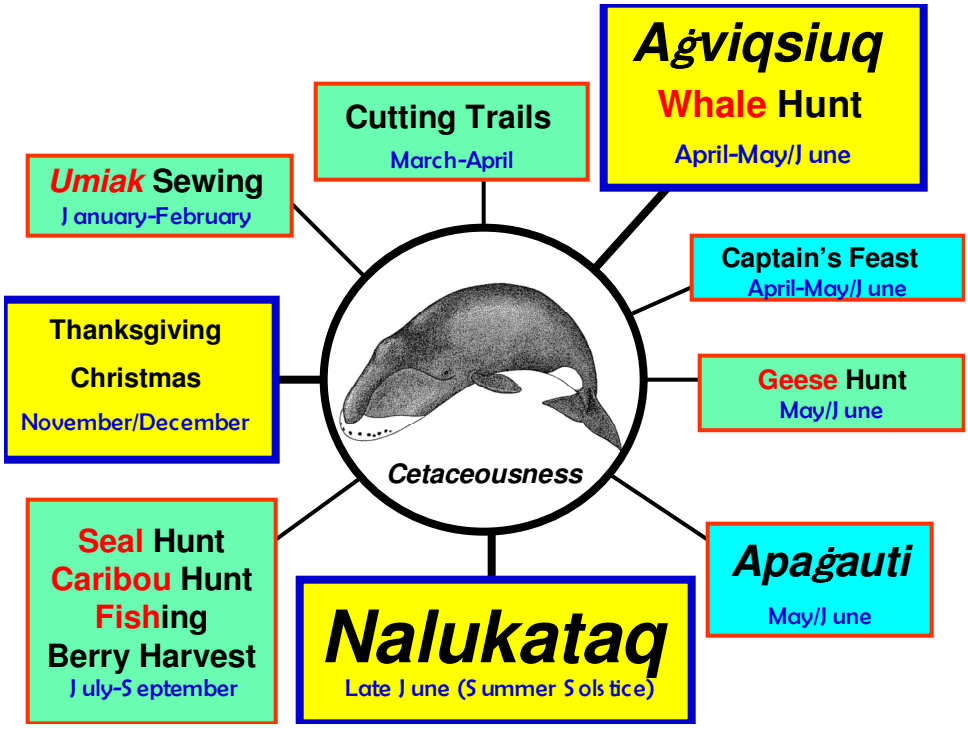


Figure 4.1 — Iñupiaq Whaling Cycle.

IÑUPIAQ WHALING CULTURE

The Iñupiaq calendar—otherwise known as the whaling cycle (Figure 4.1)—is filled with meticulous preparations for whaling at various times of the year. Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* lies in the center as the circle of life. The whale hunt is the highlight of this cycle, but it is not the sole manifestation of *cetaceousness*. Iñupiat *cetaceousness* is also embodied in hunting other animals, year-round ceremonies, feasts, and many other social components that support intense human-whale relations.

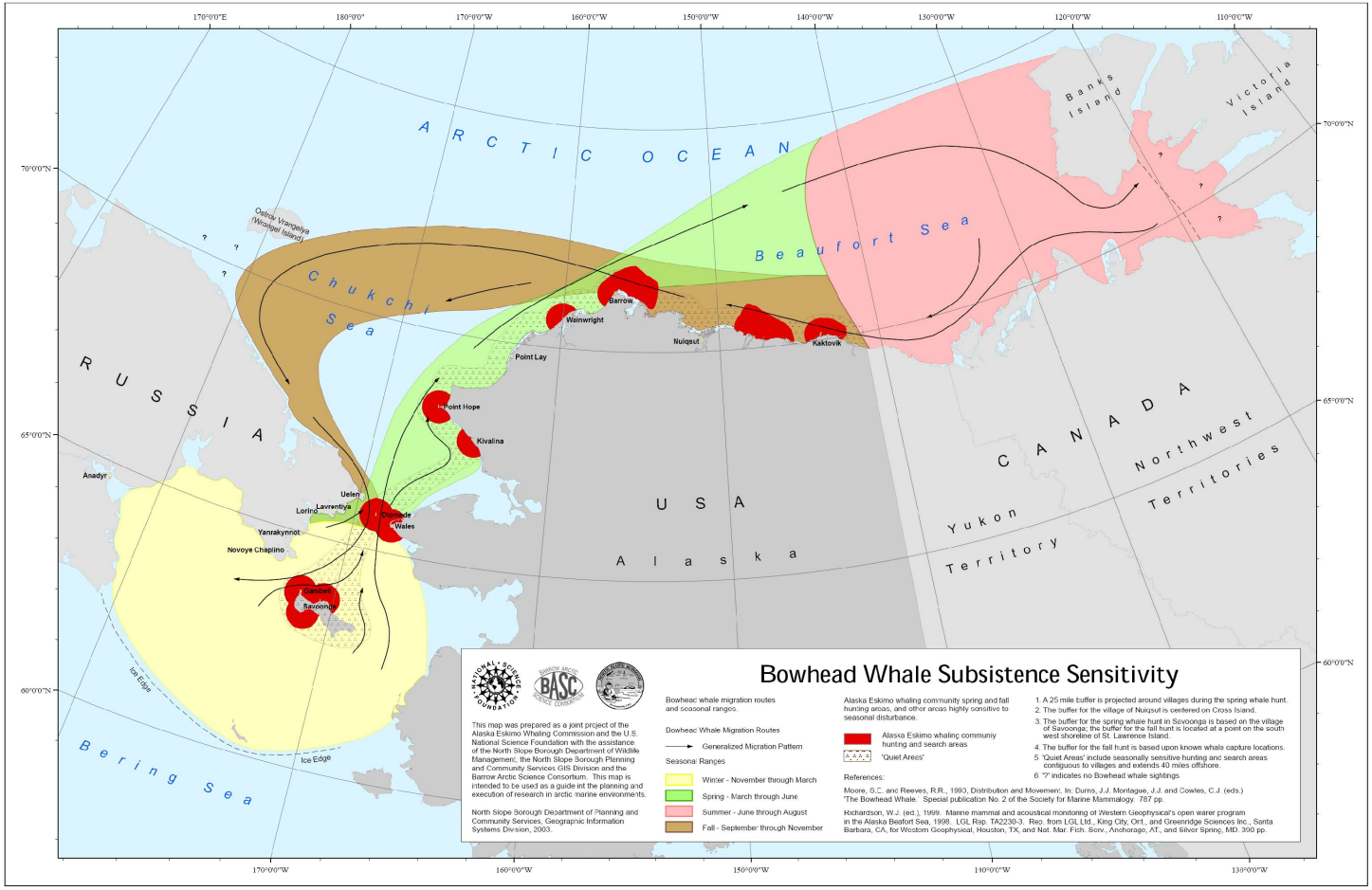


Fig. 4.2— Bowhead Whale Migration Routes and Whaling Communities. (Courtesy of Paul McNeil, NSB GIS)

Bowhead whales spend the winter along the edges of the pack ice south of the Bering Strait. Every spring as the pack ice recedes, the whales swim north through the Bering Strait and then east along the northern Alaska coast into Canadian waters to get to their summer feeding grounds in the Beaufort Sea (Figure 4.2). Their migration follows open leads (*uiñiq*) where they surface and breathe (Roy Nageak, 20 June, 2005). This is when Iñupiaq whalers have their chance. Until this time arrives, whalers patiently camp on the sea ice at the edge of the open water with their *umiaks*.

Barrow is the only community that enjoys two annual whaling seasons. The migrating whales pass by Point Barrow each spring and fall, giving the villagers two whaling seasons. The configuration of Point Barrow brings the bowhead migration near shore in both directions. In fall, when there is no shorefast ice, Barrow crews pursue whales in twenty-foot (six-meter) boats with large outboard motors. For most other communities along the Arctic coast, including Point Hope, fall whaling is not possible because the whales take a different migration route (Figure 4.2). Therefore, an unsuccessful spring hunt means few or no whales for an entire year for most of the whaling communities. In contrast to the spring whaling, fall whaling takes place on the open water as it precedes the late-fall freeze-up. The spring hunt is highly ritualized while fall whaling is more unrestrained; "Fall whaling is a good time. Very lax and we all enjoy the atmosphere of bounty together, bounty of whales," explained Beverly Hugo (10 October, 2005). Given the lack of sea ice from which to pull up whales, whales are landed on a gravel shore in fall whaling. Prior to the 1970s, fall whales were butchered on the tundra. However, the change took place when continuous coastal erosion as well as human activities caused the expansion of beach and gravel, separating beach and tundra

by a road along the shoreline (Bodenhorn, 2003). Today's Barrow villagers take advantage of front-end loaders and other modern equipment to transport whales for a short distance to the paved platform of the former Naval Arctic Research Laboratory (NARL) runway near Point Barrow (Figure 4.3).

In Iñupiaq values, tradition, subsistence, and technological transformation are often not in opposition. The sight of two front-end loaders transporting a whale from the beach was a surreal and a breathtaking view to me, especially in my first year in Barrow after participating in the first half of the whaling cycle based on traditional spring whaling. "Wow, this is so different [from the spring hunt] … you are changing your whaling tradition by incorporating technology?" I could not help asking this question. "What's changing?" Responded Roy Nageak of Barrow, a whaling captain. "The machine [front-end loader] is newer than the origin of whaling, alright, but we still treat the whale right." It was an eye-opening interpretation. With the relocation of the butchering site, the whalers would have had to drag the whale down dirt and gravel to the new site. "Technology helps us carry on our relationship with the whales. It [technology] doesn't hurt the whale or our tradition." Beverly Hugo agrees: "Yes, we have to treat the whale gently, and this feeling is what we have always treated the whales with." This episode signifies how the ways tradition, technology, and innovation are interrelated to embody the human appreciation of the whales. One of the traditional cultural priorities that this example shows is the need to treat the whales tenderly and with respect regardless of the means.

The best equipment expresses traditional Iñupiaq values the most—adaptation to the environment and retention of their *cetaceousness*. As Barbara Bodenhorn (2003)

interprets, in the Iñupiaq values, it is neither the antiquity nor novelty that is appreciated in its own right. Iñupiaq whalers take full advantage of both *umiak* and aluminum boats based on their reading of environmental conditions. For example, their first choice of whaling boat is an *umiak* in the spring because the hunters can navigate through the spring ice more easily than an aluminum boat. On the other hand, they survive the rough fall seas in a sturdier boat with an outboard motor. Similarly, waterproof materials often produce excellent rain gear; however, most people choose traditional skin parkas for winter hunting because of their heat efficiency and their guaranteed warmth passed down for generations. The people's traditions never stand in one place, but the Iñupiaq culture makes their subsistence efficient and possible especially when their environment and weather patterns are unpredictable. The Iñupiaq strategies involve flexible experimentation with various elements adapted into the moral values cultivated in the whaling cycle.

In recent years as traditional spring hunt experiences difficulties, fall whaling has provided significant amounts of whale meat and *muktuk* for the entire North Slope region. Fall whaling does not happen when the quota is met during the spring hunt. However, non-fall-whaling villages usually transfer their unfilled quotas to Barrow under the trust that Barrow whalers will send them harvested fall whales. After each hunt, a cargo plane will carry whale meat and *muktuk* from Barrow to these communities. This form of sharing sustains *cetaceousness* across the North Slope Borough, especially when any coastal villages suffer from harsh and unpredictable environmental conditions in the spring.

Central to the social act of whaling are *umialiks*, the whaling captains and their

wives (see Figure 4.10). When I was leaving for Barrow for seven months, several friends in Norman, Oklahoma, teased me that I might marry into a whaling captain's family. However, I soon learned that it could never happen because an Iñupiaq hunter cannot be a whaling captain before marriage. The dedication of his wife leads him to be a successful whaler who can be responsible for feeding the entire community and getting the series of whale-related ceremonies and events going; therefore it would be my responsibility to make a whaler into a captain if I married a hunter. *Umialiks* are never single males but married couples who own and operate *umiaks*.

Whaling captains are mostly men and are respected community leaders. The position is usually passed along family lines. A captain organizes a whaling crew, usually consisting of his family and relatives. Both men and women participate in the whaling cycle as crew members, and almost everyone in Barrow and Point Hope belongs to at least one whaling crew organized by one's immediate or extended family. Through their wealth and power, whaling captains are responsible for nourishing crew members and sharing a whale with other villagers after a hunt. *Umialiks* organize whaling crews and their success depends on both spouses. Whaling without *umialiks* is inconceivable among the Iñupiat. An *umialik* is often aided by a co-captain and his wife, and makes decisions with other crews such as whether to go out on a particular day or how to prepare feasts succeeding a whale hunt.



Figure 4.3—Aftermath of Fall Whaling. Barrow, Alaska. (1 October, 2005)

To become whalers, young boys are trained by their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers. They often begin their whaling careers at a whaling camp taking care of food, fire, and water supplies. They carefully follow traditional protocols from the time a whale is struck until it is landed, butchered, divided, cooked, and shared. From the captain and other elders, young apprentices learn about discipline, weather, *umiaks*, how to travel on the ice and the ocean, spiritualities and customary processes associated with spring and fall whaling, and most importantly, how to respect bowhead whales.

Young girls become whalers on the shore. They participate in whaling through a timely response to needs expressed by their male counterparts at the whaling camp. This includes gathering and delivering food, protective clothing, and other items necessary for the hunt. The girls are also expected to keep the house clean and to learn proper techniques for taking care of the bowhead *muktuk*, heart, meat, kidney, and intestines

(Matilda Adams, 1 July, 2005). Ultimately, it is hoped that the girls will marry future whalers and form new *umialiks*. Captains' wives belong to the Barrow Whaling Wives Auxiliary and discuss responsibilities from the wife's side of *umialik*. Matilda Adams of Barrow, a whaling captain's wife originally from Point Hope, explains: "We [women] are the captains on the land" (Figure 4.4). As a whaling captain, Roy Nageak appreciates the role of women in whaling: "The women are the drivers in the family to support the crews. We [men] just do the hunting" (20 June, 2005). Iñupiat often talk about the unity of whales and women (Bodenhorn, 1990; Lowenstein, 1993; Brewster, 2004), which they consider an indispensable aspect of successful whaling.



Figure 4.4—Women Whalers. Iñupiaq women are the captains on the land, and keep busy supporting their male counterparts from home. The photograph shows five female members of Aalaak Crew led by the *umialik* couple Eugene and Charlotte Brower, Sr. of Barrow. (7 May, 2005)

As Iñupiaq men and women grow up, they learn appropriate ways to host the whales at home: "You need to be open-minded, honest, and hospitable. Whales have good ears and eyes, so they can tell which *umialik* has an inviting place" (Matilda Adams, 1 July, 2005). Treating whales correctly also echoes moral values that Iñupiat appreciate in interpersonal relationships—in other words, how humans should treat each other.

A successful whaling captaincy requires not only collaboration between men and women but also a social organization rooted in the land. Among the Iñupiat, this form of social organization is called *Qalgi*, also transcribed in the literature as *Qargi* (MacLean, 1986; Chance, 1990; Sheehan, 1997), *Qalegi* (VanStone, 1962), *Karigi* (Whitridge, 2002), *Kasgi* (Heinrich, 1963), and *Kudrigi* or *Kudyyigi* (Lee and Reinhardt, 2003). *Qalgis* are clan-related outdoor or indoor ceremonial spaces and architecture that were once common among coastal whaling communities as sites to conduct whale-related ceremonies and feasts (Larson, 1995) (Figure 4.5). As a social institution and space, *Qalgi* traditionally served as a form of ceremonial, economic, judicial and recreational activity being structured around villagers' and crews' affiliations. Whaling families and their relatives form a clan, and each clan forms a *Qalgi*. A *Qalgi* membership signifies an Iñupiaq clan identity and determines whaling crew affiliations. For example, in Point Hope, the oldest whaling community with the two oldest family clans, the village consists of several extended families and whaling crews based on the *Qalgi* system.

Qalgis also refer to ceremonial houses with whale-bone structures that are still visible in Point Hope (Larson, 1995, 2003) (Figure 4.6). Glenn W. Sheehan (1997) describes the structure of qalgis as "construction of a whale" as almost every aspect of whale was revealed in the building of *Qalgi* (pp. 149-151). By using mainly bowhead

whale bones, a *Qalgi* excavated in Barrow evinces the centrality of whaling (Lee and Reinhardt, 2003), and the style is commonly found in the former settlement of Point Hope. The traditional *Qalgi* architecture is symbolic of the whale's stomach as these houses literally appear to be whales (Fannie Akpik, 10 July, 2005; Pete Lisbourne, 19 August, 2005). As Suuyuk Lane, Sr. of Point Hope told me, there is an analogy between "walking into the *Qalgi*" and "entering the belly of the whale" (20 August, 2005) (Figures 4.7). In the outside open space, enormous bowhead jawbones penetrate the tundra ground to consecrate the space (Figure 4.5). Today, in contrast to traditional design, *Qalgi* architecture can also appear much like other communal dwellings, although many contain whale parts like baleens or jawbones inside (Figure 4.8).

Through the whaling cycle, *Qalgi* socially and spatially brings the sea (the whale) and the land (the people) together. The village of Point Hope, at least seven outdoor *Qalgi* spaces in the nineteenth century (Rainey, 1947; Larson, 2003; Lee and Reinhardt, 2003). While their influence is still extant in the village, there are only two *Qalgis* left in Point Hope today. The rest of the structures were lost to the rising sea by the 1970s. The remaining two *Qalgis* were relocated to new sites in 1977 at the time of the village relocation (see Chapter V). Current *Qalgis* are located on the eastern (*Qagmaqtuuq*) and western (*Uŋasiksikaaq*) edges of the village and embrace all families. All whaling cycle activities are still arranged in accordance with a whaling crew's *Qalgi* membership. As in the past, the *Qalgi* system cultivates the people's physical and spiritual reciprocity with each other and with the whale.



Figure 4.5—Outdoor *Qalgi* space, *Uŋasiksikaaq*, Point Hope. (20 August, 2005)



Figure 4.6—Remnant *Qalgi*, Point Hope.



Figure 4.7—Whalebone House (Exterior), Tiġara Site, Point Hope. The house was made of whalebones and driftwood, and was inhabited until the village relocation in 1977. The exterior view reminds us of the contour of a landed whale, and the interior evokes a whale's stomach.



Figures 4.8—Whalebone House (Interior), Tiġara Site, Point Hope.



Figures 4.9—Point Hope *Qalgi* Center ("City Hall").
The dome in the center is the Point Hope municipal building called the "*Qalgi* Center."



Figure 4.10—*Qalgi* Center Entrance, Point Hope.

In Barrow, *Qalgi* also continues to be important although the system itself was significantly modified during Barrow's exposure to missionaries in the late nineteenth century. As a result, the traditional rootedness of humans to their clan space has declined in Barrow. Instead, the villagers retain one spacious *Qalgi*, otherwise known as the communal *Nalukataq* ground where almost the entire village gathers and celebrates the whales after the spring whaling (Figure 4.9). While their modern *Qalgi* has experienced several relocations due to continuous erosion and flooding in Barrow, the space still unifies the villagers to celebrate the whales. I found the idea of *Qalgi* to be a vital element of *cetaceousness* because it unifies the people, the land, and the ocean via clan memberships and whaling preparations and the events of the whaling cycle. Indeed, a *Qalgi* anchors *cetaceousness* in a ritual space and fosters a complex geographic relationship (see also Chapters V and VI).



Figure 4.11—Barrow *Qalgi* or *Nalukataq* Ground. (20 June, 2005)
The whales' tails (*Aqikkak*)—delicacies—are placed at the heart of *Qalgi* to be freely shared by villagers and visitors alike.

WHALING CYCLE

The whaling cycle rotates as the seasons change. Jeslie Kaleak, Sr. explains:

> You can join the cycle at any point. It doesn't matter when [you join] because there's no end [to the cycle]; there's no clear beginning or end. But you can't skip any steps in the cycle. Everything needs to be done well in this order. When the time comes and the whale sees our hard work, it finally decides to give itself to us. Then we have feasts, festivals and start a new round of preparation all over that continue until the next hunt. (10 September, 2005)

To honor the whale, whaling preparations involve the lives of other northern animals. From July to September, hunters go out on the ocean in their *umiaks* to hunt the ringed seal (*Pusa hispida*; *natchiq* in Iñupiaq), the spotted seal (*Phoca largha*; *qasigiaq*) and the bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*; *ugruk*). Bearded seals are especially important because the whalers use the sealskins to cover wooden *umiak* frames in the following spring.

> In order to get the bowhead whale, there's a long process of work that's involved, starts out with the seal hunt that we can have rope, fuel for the stoves, skin for clothing … skins that come in the fats and also food. This is a lot of hard work for us, but we live and love doing it today. We've done it for thousands of years. I would like to see my nephews continue this work, our lifestyle. I would like to see my nephew's children continue this lifestyle. (Henry Koonuk, 15 November, 2006)

Hunters are mostly men, but sometimes skilled female villagers successfully hunt seals and bring home the figurative bacon. One's first successful sealing often marks a right of passage for young male and female hunters, though the seal hunt is not as ritualized as the whale hunt.

Dark winter is also a crucial season for Iñupiaq crews to prepare for the spring whaling. Throughout this preparation period, snowmobiles are tuned and sleds are built.

Warm fur clothing is made and repaired by the captain's wife and other female crew members during the winter months. To cover an *umiak* frame that will hold six men, the women sew between five and nine sealskins together to develop a shell twenty-five feet (7.62 meter) long and five feet (1.5 meter) wide. The sealskin seamstresses make the crucial waterproof stitches with braided caribou sinew or tendons soaked in seal oil. Thus, seals (the sea), caribou (the land), and whale are unified in the preparation for bringing the whale to the shore. As cited in Fannie Kuutuuq Akpik and Roger Trottier (1996), Susan Patkotak, a whaling captain's wife explained how Iñupiaq women hunt the whales by making an analogy between sewing the skins properly and getting in the boat and rowing after the whale and making a kill.

As the women work on the *umiak* covers, the men go out on the sea ice with axes and chisels to slowly chip a path that zigzags through the lowest parts of ridges (*ivuñiq*) on the sea ice to get to the open ocean. This process often takes up to three months. Rough trails would risk the lives of the crew members by making them fall into a hole. The men work night and day on the ice, sometimes taking off their parkas to perspire freely despite the below-zero temperatures. Upon successful arrival to the ice edge, they scout for a stable spot surrounded by heavy ice on which to set up a camp.

There are many other tasks that an *umialik* must accomplish before welcoming the whale to their home. The *umialik* should clean an ice cellar (*sigluaq*), and fill its floor with fresh snow to make a pleasant resting place for the whale. The ice cellar is a pit dug down into the tundra at depth of thirteen to twenty-six feet (four to eight meters); the permafrost keeps stored items frozen (Figure 4.10). Older *muktuk* and meat are distributed to the elders and other community members in need. The crew also must have

enough food to stay out on the ice for at least several weeks. Caribou, seal meat, berries, and other native foods that have been preserved in the previous summer are to be taken to a whaling camp. This custom makes the mid-summer subsistence activities integral to the whaling cycle.

As the Iñupiat say, April is *agaviksiuviktatqiq*, "the moon when whaling begins" (Nelson, 1980). This month marks the start of extended daylight hours with no real darkness. The high Arctic stays in almost full sunlight all day long throughout the entire summer. After the summer solstice, the sun starts to sink toward the horizon, but the moon rarely appears until the end of August. With the sun on their side, each spring is a time of light and hope for bringing a whale home. The crew is ready to head out to the camp by mid-April when snow buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*; *amautligaaluk*) flutter over the snow prior to bowhead arrival. The snow buntings are the harbingers of the spring and the messengers from the whale that invite the hunters to the ice (George Ahmaogak, Sr., 20 September, 2005). Every spring, whalers wait patiently until a dark streak of clouds appears far out over the icy horizon. These dark clouds imply the existence below of an open lead of water. This is called the water sky (*kissuk*). At this time, strong winds often push against the mobile ice pack, breaking it free and opening a lead of water that can be as wide as several miles. As they wait for *kissuk*, the whalers clean their equipment and put on new clothes. Their parkas are snow white to make them invisible to the whale. Everything needs to appear pleasing to the whale's eye. Humility is an Iñupiaq asset, and the whalers should not brag about themselves or become demanding to the whale. Noise is also strictly forbidden because water-borne sounds easily threaten the sensitive whale. When the crew finally departs for the whaling camp,

the captain's wife announces on the radio an invitation to villagers for a send-off. The wife shows the generosity of the *umialik* by throwing handfuls of candy to children. After a village elder blesses the whalers, the *umiak*, and the bowhead they seek, the whaling crew heads out on snowmobiles to the ice edge. With the goodwill of the village and the spirits on their side, the crew pulls sleds loaded with supplies and a large flat sled with the *umiak* tied onto it. Now, everything seems to be ready.



Figure 4.12—*Sigluaq* as the Whale's Home on Land. The Kaleak Crew of Barrow looking into their *sigluaq*. (15 June, 2005)

"*AĠVIQ*! *AĠVIQ*! A WHALE IS COMING!"

The whaling camps are set up on the shorefast ice—the sea ice that is attached or fastened to land. The ice cover of northern Alaska is a mixture of shorefast ice (*tuvaq*) and moving pack ice (*sarri*). Shorefast ice is neither marine nor terrestrial; it is a combination of both (George et al., 2004). The shorefast ice also protects shorelines from storms that cause coastal erosion (George et al., 2004). Although it disappears during the

short summer, shorefast ice is an essential platform for Iñupiat travels, camps, and hunts during winter and spring months. During the spring hunt, many whaling crews establish a number of whaling camps scattered for a mile along the lead edge on the shorefast ice.

The whale hunt cannot be achieved without months of patient waiting. “A whale [doesn’t] come without our patience. Our endurance is a skill that we learn from the whale,” explained George Kingik of Point Hope (20 August, 2005). Commonly, no one sees or even hears a whale for several days. Even when a whale surfaces nearby, it may elude the chase or swim too far out in the lead. Additionally, hunting is subject to considerable environmental interference (Suydam et al., 2006). For example, weather often plays a role by shifting the current or wind directions, bringing pack ice inward until there is only a narrow lane of open water or worse, a completely sealed lead.



Figure 4.13—Getting Ready for the Hunt. Barrow, May 2006. (Courtesy of Roy Nageak, Sr.)

At a whaling camp, crew members maintain continuous watch even when they do not sense the whale at all. The hunters make themselves at home on the ice unless life-risking weather or ice conditions drive them back to the land. At the sea-ice camp, the whalers retain their concentration by entertaining themselves with quiet conversations, storytelling, and even occasional acoustically restrained dancing and singing for the whales if they do not witness whales for several days (James Matumeuk, 18 June, 2005).

At all times, the hunters' lives focus onward that very moment when the bowhead surfaces within reach of the harpoon (Figure 4.13). "*Aġviq*!" As soon as someone calls out, the crew sets off into the icy ocean with full energy. An *umiak* accommodates six whalers with the captain in the back and the harpooner in the front. The four other members sit in the middle and paddle quickly, following the directions given by the captain. As the *umiak* approaches the whale, the men lower their paddles and stroke the sea surface harder. When they get close enough, the harpooner lurches backward and fires the harpoon gun. Water splashes high as the explosive head hits the whale, entering where the enormous skull and backbone are joined. Next the harpooner lifts the heavy iron-tipped harpoon shaft high, then thrusts almost vertically into the black skin piercing through the thick layer of *muktuk*. Ideally, this attack causes instant death. A rope and floats attached to the harpoon head allows the crew to stay adrift with the animal. Soon the whale disappears into the sea and the float bobs up some distance away.

Prior to the introduction of modern technology, hunters in *umiaks* confronted the bowhead with an eight-foot (2.54 meter) wooden-shaft harpoon. The wooden shaft was made from driftwood traditionally. The harpoon's head was made of walrus ivory, carved to stay in its target (Fitzhugh and Cromwell, 1988). Because the bowhead swims only at

the walking pace of a person, skilled *umiak* whalers could easily overtake their prey (J. C. George, 19 April, 2005). Several inflated sealskin bags were attached to the leather harpoon lines to slow down the whale and to mark its location. When the whale was exhausted, the harpooner gave a final thrust with a long-handled stone tipped lance. Without the harpoon gun or the shoulder gun, traditional whalers were more concerned with the line attached to the harpoon getting tangled. In tremendous pain, the whale can tip the boat over or pull someone out of the *umiak* (Roy Nageak, Sr., 20 June, 2005). Once struck, the bowhead sinks under water but eventually floats back to surface. This bowhead attribute of floating upon death helps make Iñupiat survival possible in the Arctic. Like their ancestors before them, today's whalers continue to conduct rituals and prayers to appease the whale's spirit. The technology and procedure of the hunt may have changed, but the social bonds and values they sustain have not.

AFTER THE HUNT

Once the dead whale resurfaces after a strike, everyone is set to work. The hunters tie a heavy rope to the narrow point of its immense tail and fasten all the *umiaks* and motorized boats to it. In the past, things were different. The deceased whale was tied by seal-skin cords and was towed by several *umiaks*, one ahead of the other. Vernal Stone, an elder of Point Hope recalls her grandfather's words:

> My *aapa* [grandpa] told me how they did it. The whalers were all very exhausted after the hunt. Their arms and shoulders were already heavy and swollen. But they didn't even think about stopping [towing in the whale] … if they stopped and lost the whale's momentum, they could never have moved the whale again in the water. So they just paddled, paddled, and paddled! (20 August, 2005)

At the edge of the ice, the whale was secured by ropes and butchered while it was still in

the sea (Brower, 1994). Sometimes the whalers attempted to pull small whales on to the ice with the seal skin ropes, but I heard that it was extremely difficult. One thing has not changed: Crews and helpers eat fresh *muktuk* on the spot.

It usually takes less time today to pull the whale to the lead edge. The successful crew is often helped by other crews to hold the heavy animal at the edge of the ice. Meanwhile their success is radioed to the village. The catching of a whale is a happy occasion. Cheers, cries, and calls of congratulations come out of VHF radios. The word goes out quickly, and people come from the village to help bring in the whale. Many offices become empty when a whale is caught as the people rush to go help butcher or to prepare food for the coming feasts. A young whaler carrying the crew flag runs across the sea ice all the way to the village and erects the flag on the roof of the captain's house.

When the whale finally reaches the camp, it is pulled up against solid ice.[8] Now the oldest and most experienced men take charge, as they prepare to haul the whale up onto the shorefast ice. First, they secure a thick and durable polypropylene rope to the whale's tail (Figure 4.12). The flukes, a special delicacy, are removed to reduce weight. To establish a block-and-tackle pulley system, a hand-held, gas-powered ice auger drills a channel in the ice through which a heavy line is passed. Attached to the line are the hands of up to one hundred men and women ready to pull the whale (Figures 4.14 and 4.18). The whale may be as large as seventy-five feet (twenty-three meters) long and weigh seventy tons above the water. It may take all night or longer to tow it. When it comes up halfway, the whalers cut off some of the *muktuk*. This *muktuk* is taken back to the captain's tent on site, cooked in hot water by female crew members and served to helpers

[8] If the hunt happens under the midnight sun, the crew often needs to rely on snowmobile engines to pull up the whale. Some villagers, however, always hear the radio and respond to the victorious cry by getting to the ice with excitement.

as hot energizing *uunaalik* (boiled *muktuk*). While the dismantling of the whale goes on and fresh blood soaks into the ice, crew members distribute shares to villagers. Others take meat and *muktuk* to underground ice cellars, the whale's home on land. Butchering continues through the entire day and well into the night, until nothing remains except the voluminous whale's skull, which is almost one third as long as the whale itself. Hunters slowly push the skull off the ice edge into the water to show respect for the whale and to assure proper reincarnation of its soul so that it can return to be killed again (Willie Nashookpuk, Point Hope, 20 July, 2005).

My personal involvement with Iñupiaq whaling began in 2005. When my airplane arrived in Barrow under the brilliant April sunlight, all forty-one active whaling crews were already on the sea ice cutting trails to the open water. Barrow was alive with various activities and the return of the whales. On May 9, when powerful cries of "Hey-hey-hey!" were broadcasted on VHF congratulating the successful crew for the successful whale hunt, I immediately ran the trail across rough ridges all the way down to the ice edge. On the horizon, bowhead and beluga whales were rushing to the north. The harvested bowhead was a robust thirty-foot (ten-meter) male. The ocean was calm, the whale was beautiful and the whalers were ecstatic. With a big smile and cheer, everyone came down onto the ice to help. I immediately became part of this joyous crowd and pulled the rope with others amidst cries of "All hands!" and "Walk away!" Despite their exhaustion, the hunters expressed their joy with a low pitched yodeling sound that imitated the bellowing of a walrus, "Ooh-oo, ooh-oo!"

The successful whaling crew was PK-13. The whaling captaincy was passed down by the late Paul Kignak, Sr., a well-respected elder of Barrow who had died seven

months prior to this hunt. It was now assigned to Mae and Kiogak Ahgeak, Kignak's oldest daughter and her husband who became the *umialik* (Figure 4.15 left). It was the crew's first whale in the past forty years. In fact, the last successful hunt for PK-13 was in the 1960s by Kignak, Sr. himself. After the landing of the whale, the joy of the family exploded—I saw the hunters crying, hugging each other everywhere on the ice, and standing in tears on the whale. It was an emotional experience for me, too. Being there with the whalers made me want to know more about the whaling family, and tempted me to be involved with the succeeding whaling cycle. Out on the ice, I approached Mae and asked if I could help the crew prepare the captain's feast to be held on the following day. "Do *you* want to help?" said Mae, looking into my eyes straight through my sunglasses. She then continued with a broad smile, "Sure!" On the shorefast ice, the pulling process took seventy adults about two hours. It took six additional hours to butcher the whale and to distribute the various body parts to all the crews who came to help. I later heard that the hunters spent the night on the ice finishing cleaning the carcass. Then they returned the skull to the sea.

Villagers and whales get together on the sea ice. This tradition, however, is being jeopardized as thinning of ice threatens the lives of people, and these practices may shift with environmental conditions. Point Hope whalers who traditionally preferred to catch large whales are now selecting smaller whales, because smaller whales weigh less and are safer to butcher on the sea ice that is losing density. Barbara Bodenhorn (2003) reports the same trend observed in Wainwright, another North Slope whaling community located eighty-six miles (138 kilometers) west of Barrow.

Decisions about selection criteria have opted for quality over quantity. Barrow

whaling captains made decisions to go after smaller whales, even though the total number taken remained fixed, thus lessening the total amount of food that might be harvested. Given that smaller whales provide more tender meat and are more easily butchered, especially as the shorefast ice thins, it was felt in Barrow that smaller whales provide more usable food at this time of monumental challenges. The decisions people reach include a lively awareness of environmental conditions and an equally lively sensitivity to the implications of their actions.



Figure 4.14 — After the Hunt. Ernest Nageak and James Matumeuk of the PK-13 Crew securing the rope attached to the whale's tail off Barrow. (9 May, 2005)





Figures 4.15 —Two *Umialiks*. Left: Mae and Kiogak Ahgeak (center) of PK-13 holding their crew flag as a respected *umialik*. They are also the beloved grandparents of Michelle Ahgeak (far left) and Kiana Solomon (far right) (14 May, 2005). **Right:** Julia and Jeslie Kaleak, Sr. of Kaleak Crew dressed up for the midsummer whale feast, *Nalukataq* (28 June, 2005). Their crew caught two whales in 2005—one in the spring and the other in the fall.

WHALE HUNT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

We were out on the sea ice when radiowave brought us the sad news. On May 22, 2005, I was visiting the whaling camp of Kaleak Crew to celebrate their first successful spring hunt. The whale was a large female, 51.5 feet (15.7 meters). The whale was lifeless in the icy ocean, but the whalers were full of life in spite of their sleepless night of paddling and towing. As we rejoiced, many villagers rushed through the trail to the whaling camp to participate in the great pull. The VHF report, however, had it that an eighteen-year-old hunter was drowned to death in the Middle Lagoon in Barrow as he drove through a heavy fog. The youth had been missing for a week, after suddenly disappearing on his way back from his uncle's whaling camp one night. Traditionally,

mid-May is a time when hunters walk across or even ride snowmobiles on frozen lagoons or the sea. We kept a vigil on the shorefast ice, yet no one stopped working as the whale meat would be wasted and the ice could break as the dismantling progressed. Jeslie Kaleak Sr. said: “The ice shouldn’t have been a problem. This is our crisis, we, the people as a whole. The world is changing too fast” (23 May, 2005).

Pete Frankson of Point Hope remembers how Iñupiaq hunters were originally not convinced about climate change earlier: “Well, we were wondering if it [global warming and environmental change] was true. We thought they [non-native scientists] were trying to scare us for nothing, or maybe with too much exaggeration” (June 19, 2006). The hunters had seen the real changes, but they remained firmly unconvinced, especially regarding information “sent out from the south” (Pete Frankson, June 19, 2006). They had realized the sea ice was less reliable and more fragile than never, but their experience also told them how weather repeated warmer and colder phases in the past on a regular basis. However, the current rate of climate change is unprecedented. Pamiuq Elangak of Barrow said:

> Today we believe what the scientists are saying—the Arctic is melting. But we didn’t before, because how could we notice a difference in everyday life? No one predicted the change would come so fast, so we hoped that this would turn out to be just a long warm time. (18 April, 2005)

Furthermore, the Iñupiaq hunters were initially not sure whether overall changes are positive or negative. The impacts of late freeze-up, for example, vary widely and include better whitefish harvests, better clamming, better access to driftwood. Extended warm periods blessed the villagers with a longer salmon berry harvest season as well. One elderly hunter shared with me his initial impression on warming: “A little bit of warming up was fine, that’s what we thought. We thought it would make our survival easier

because, as you know it, it was always freaking cold when we were out to hunt around here!" However, the hunters gradually became aware of unfavorable changes in their environment. This is when Iñupiaq hunters started talking of how they had experienced warmer winters, weaker sea ice, and stronger storms since the 1950s and 1960s. The changes in the temperatures have been extremely different, said Kenny Toovak of Barrow, who claims to have witnessed the change since his birth in 1923 (20 October, 2005).

Combining the facts that the extreme acceleration in the melting of ancient ice coincided with unprecedented increases in anthropogenic accumulation of CO2, permafrost record and many other environmental trends that pointed in the same direction, some scientists thought the case was strong for human causes. The Iñupiat see consequences that are widespread and varied yet still intertwined with the timing, quality of ice, associated weather, and ecological effects, so that it is impossible to look at any one facet in isolation. For example, late freeze-up is one likely consequence of regional climate warming, and hence a relevant example for considering the impacts of climate change that brings crucial influences upon people, wildlife, and indigenous cultures based upon human-environmental interactions.

These compilations of environmental evidence correspond with what had been witnessed by the Iñupiaq people. In late 2005, the Iñupiaq representatives along with the ICC submitted a petition to the Washington DC-based Inter-American Commission on Human Rights seeking relief from violations of their human rights resulting from global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions from the United States. The report shows a summation of the climate's variation and trend. The village elders and leaders got

together, looked at many changes in nature, discussed among themselves what they had seen, and reached a consensus based on broad evidence. Over long time spans, natural systems combined change into recognizable patterns; people who lived within those natural systems synthesized the signals they perceived into an understanding of the whole. The petition manifested how Iñupiaq minds and senses are receptive to subtle perceptions, communication, comparison, pattern recognition, and intuition about the most complex natural system.

For the Iñupiat, climate change began to interfere with human-whale relations by not letting the whales give themselves to the hunters. "Those poor whales out there in the ocean that we depend on. Are they going to come back to us? Are they going to really show up next year, like our ancestors always expected them for 20,000 years? We are concerned," Earl Kingik of Point Hope deplored (15 November, 2006). The spring whaling in 2005 and 2006 exemplify extremes in the spring weather and hunting conditions. In the following, I compare the two spring seasons in which hunting success was markedly different between the two seasons with their extremely high and low productivities. The gaps in environmental conditions and whale harvest levels indicate changes are underway.

SPRING 2005. Spring 2005 whaling was successful, a real boost after the decline of whale harvest experienced in the spring of 2004 when only six whales were landed. The IWC whaling quota for Barrow (twenty-two whales) was reached on May 23 by landing sixteen whales and losing six. The whalers declared the season's "cease fire" before the end of the spring bowhead migration period. Point Hope whalers also had a productive hunting season by harvesting seven, close to their quota of nine strikes. In

spite of the rough and thin ice, and despite the fact that the polar ice cap size has been reduced to its smallest extent in the summer, the constant east winds miraculously kept the lead open (Figure 4.14). As a result, the bounty of whales uplifted whalers' spirits and sustained the year's whaling cycle. Yet, according to Ben Nageak of Barrow, former Director of the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management, the sea ice movement increased its unpredictability: "Last fall [2004], the sea ice didn't form until very late in the winter. The ice melted or went off too soon … soon after we stopped whaling. We don't see any trace of sea ice from the Point. There's just too much open water, the ocean is ice-free, and it had never been like this before to this extent" (8 August, 2005). Repeated incomplete freezing in the winter and early thawing of the sea ice in the spring means that the ice that appears can be piled up by the wind, creating very rough conditions and many obstacles to travel by snowmobile which begin once the ice freezes up permanently. Late season storm surges, unimpacted by ice, can create erosion and affects roads across Arctic Alaska. From what I saw and heard, the ice condition was out of the ordinary in both 2005 and 2006. Beyond each ridge, a jumble of broken ice continued until the next ridge appeared. The whalers referred to this condition as "junk ice," "crazy ice" or "rebelling ice." Under these circumstances, the whalers were worried if the collection of new ice would hold without breaking off during whaling. They also wondered if the thin ice could attract the bowhead, and if the whalers could find a strong, large, flat place to pull up a whale after the hunt. In spite of the productive whaling season in the spring 2005, in retrospect, the future difficulties could already have been expected for the following spring.

SPRING 2006. In stark contrast to the 2005 season, the whalers of both Barrow

and Point Hope had a difficult whaling period in the spring 2006 due to limited access to open waters. The inhospitable 2006 spring environment brought only three whales to Barrow and none to Point Hope, far below their typical harvest levels. “No open water,” many whalers grumbled. It was a sharp contrast from record amount of open waters in the previous spring. Across the North Slope, there were only five successful whale harvests in the spring 2006, two in Wainwright and three in Barrow. The number is exceptionally small compared to the total of twenty-seven whales landed by the villages of Barrow, Wainwright, and Point Hope in the spring 2005. An elderly captain said that the 2006 spring season harvest in the North Slope Borough was the lowest in the past thirty-five years. A majority of whalers blamed “stubborn” sea ice, unseasonable and inconsistent wind directions that kept the lead closed, and the changing fluxes of oceanic currents that disabled the formation of open leads by pushing the ice firmly to the shore. Even when a lead was open, the situation was problematic; there were several instances in which the harpooned whales went beneath the thick ice and died where the hunters could never retrieve them (Mae Ahgeak, 18 June, 2006). The whale meat was spoiled as the hunters were agitated on the ice. A whale lost after a strike and later found dead is called a “stinker” as its death cannot nourish Iñupiaq life yet the whalers are responsible for collecting the body and cleaning it. The aerial image (Figure 4.15) reveals how the Beaufort Sea experienced the tremendous concentration of ice almost to the shore as late as late July. The solid white expanse of ice almost completely hides the blue-black sea surface. The texture of rough chunky ice that the whalers called “junk ice” is also visible on the photograph where new ice has formed around pieces of older ice from previous years.

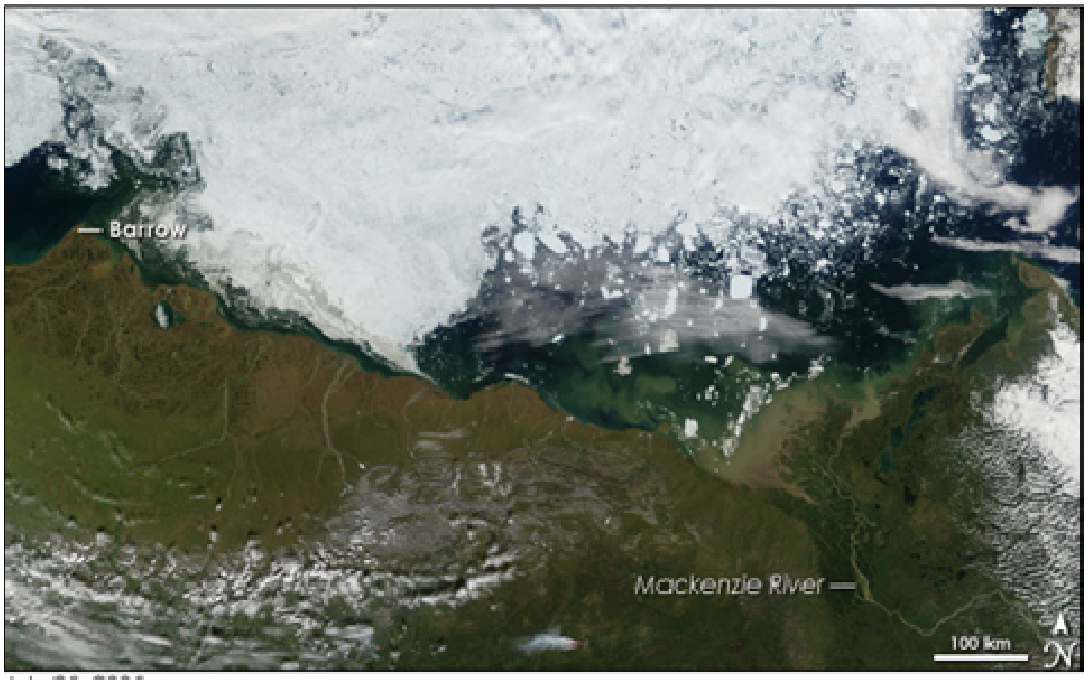


Figure 4.16—Sea Ice in the Beaufort Sea, July 2005.
(taken from the NASA Earth Observatory)

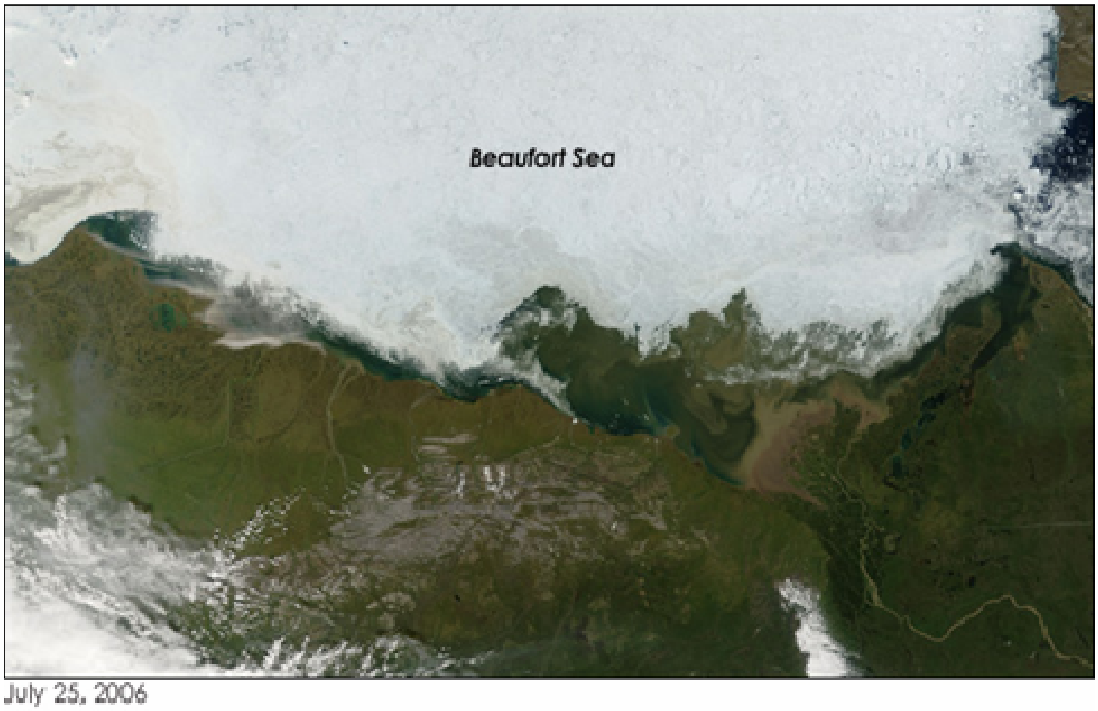


Figure 4.17—Sea Ice in the Beaufort Sea, July 2006.

(taken from the NASA Earth Observatory)

In retrospect, there was already a sign of unusual weather between the winter 2005 and the early spring 2006. The winter experienced an excessive sea-ice freeze up that had not happened in the past few decades (Robert Akpik, 20 June, 2006). The whalers were initially happy to see the multi-year ice approach, knowing a solid shorefast ice would bless them with safer travel routes to whaling camps. Recently, little multi-year ice (*piqaluyak*) had appeared off the shores of Barrow and Point Hope (Richard Glenn, 21 April, 2005). Multi-year ice can grow as large as fifteen meters thick (fifty feet thick). Sometimes multi-year ice is solid enough to make a strong ground for pulling up whales, and it anchors the shorefast ice in place with its great mass (Richard Glenn, 21 April, 2005) (Figure 4.16). Young ice or first-year ice, in contrast, is thin and fragile. With little flat ice (*ignignaq*) to work with, it is getting increasingly difficult to cut a trail to open water and to locate a secure spot to build a stable whaling camp. Undoubtedly, it is also getting more challenging to locate a stable spot to set up a block-and-tackle to tow the whale so as not to lose human lives or the whale to the ocean since the shorefast ice often cracks during the installation.

In theory, the unusual ice concentration of the winter 2005 and the spring 2006 would have promised crews a safer whaling and butchering environment. In late January 2006, however, two ice surges (*ivus*) sent large blocks of ice crashing ashore like frozen *tsunamis*. Thick multi-year ice had shoved younger, thinner ice onto shore like huge stacks of ice cubes, producing large blocks accumulating to twenty feet high and one hundred feet long (six meters high and thirty meters long) (Associated Press, 27 January, 2006). The tremendous amount of ice confined the Point Hope hunters to the shore literally until the end of the summer (Pete Lisbourne, 20 June, 2006). Westerly winds

also drove considerable multi-year ice along the coast completely choking the nearshore leads.

The lingering ice seemingly contradicts the idea of global warming and the loss of multi-year ice. Still, conditions suggest climate change is an apt description for what is happening. The NASA Earth Observatory (2007b) explains that this case confirms the increasing unpredictability of the recent Arctic environment. First, temperatures in the sea suddenly dropped below average in the fall of 2005 and remained cool in the Beaufort Sea region, which allowed sea ice to form quickly. Thick multi-year ice from the north drifted into the Beaufort Sea because of the record melting of sea ice during the summer before. It eventually hit the seasonally ice-free coast of Barrow and concentrated by the shore. Some of the multi-year ice remained frozen in the sea among the first-year ice that formed over the winter, creating the rough surface. Finally, strong west winds pushed more ice toward the shore causing the *ivu* (ice surge) phenomenon, which resulted in the lingering multi-year ice in the Beaufort Sea at the end of July 2006. According to NASA Earth Observatory (2007b), this unusual sea ice concentration demonstrates that the Arctic as a whole is continuing to melt at an ever-quickening pace.

Because the whalers were iced in, the 2006 spring whaling was delayed and whalers missed the majority of the spring bowhead migration. By early July when the lead was finally secured, the sea ice was too fragile to set up camps. The lead was also too wide to hunt from an *umiak*. “Everything is working against us,” Alice Brower said as she looked out towards the still frozen beach in early July. The VHF whaling channel was also quiet, and less communication was maintained on the radiowave throughout the hunting season in which the People of the Whales used to be the most active. Villagers

tuned into the local radio weather forecast, checked the wind directions, and helplessly stood by the beach in search of any open water. Dense summer fog came from the south with high winds and stayed in the village for a number of days, cutting off the community from the rest of the world. Iñupiat ability to travel was highly influenced as well. Stranded by the ice and fog, it was a helpless feeling just to be in Barrow and Point Hope during such a time of subsistence difficulties.

The insufficient whale harvest made the villagers hungrier than ever; it was a starvation at emotional and spiritual levels. "No whale yet. We have no food to eat, and we are getting skinnier day by day!" lamented Herbert Kinneeveauk, Sr. of Point Hope while he spoke on the phone to his relative in Kotzebue in northwestern Alaska (June 23, 2006). With the term "skinnier," Kinneeveauk referred to the Iñupiaq belief that the whale makes an Iñupiaq a real and whole person. Western "store foods" fill their stomachs and save them from starvation, but the Iñupiat feel that they do not have the nutritional value to meet the needs of the northern peoples. "It is the red meat. Our strength is born from the dark red meat of the whale," said Lonnie Solomon, harpooner of PK-13 Crew of Barrow (June 9, 2006).

The recent popularity of western foods started causing a questionable trend in Iñupiaq health. With the lack of whale harvest, both in Barrow and Point Hope, conversations were muted even during family get-togethers; men were tired of waiting and women became restless without getting fresh *muktuk* to process and to generously give away. With only three whales, the annual *Nalukataq* was rather quiet in Barrow. Worse, there were no whale feasts in Point Hope that summer.

In 2006, I witnessed the relationship between insufficient whales and rising social

tensions. The inadequate whale harvest caused social distrust among the villagers. Some suspected others of breaking taboos and offending the whales and driving them away (see Chapter VI). These tensions disrupted crew teamwork, too. Several whalers mentioned communal disharmony and anxiety caused by the high level of stress, and completely rejected my question about whether the tension possibly arose from other causes. "Our life is all about whaling," said Steve Oommituuk (18 June, 2006). One villager worriedly told me that the loss of 2006 whaling had to do with breaking a taboo and letting a non-Iñupiaq journalist publish about the ceremony. "It's even on the internet! The whales are mad at us, that is why. We had a bad season in 2002 too, as someone else did something wrong that spring."

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON BOWHEADS, AND OTHER ARCTIC MARIME MAMMALS

The impact of climate-induced perturbations on the bowhead whale is still less certain than for other ice-breeding marine mammals, but W. C. G. Burns (2001) suggests grave implications for Arctic whales. Recent shifts in climatic conditions—sea ice thickness and concentrations, distribution of ocean currents, and sea surface temperatures—are influencing both migration patterns of the bowhead whales and hunters' access to whales (Dixon, 2003). Temperature is one of the main factors, together with food availability, which determines the large-scale distribution patterns of Arctic animals (ACIA, 2007). Because most animal species tend to prefer specific temperature range (Coutant, 1977; Scott, J., 1982), long-term changes in temperature can lead to expansion or contraction of the distribution range of a species. These changes are generally most evident near the northern or southern boundaries of the species range.

Warming results in a northward shift while cooling draws species southward. Several whalers in Barrow and Point Hope expressed their awareness of a shift in bowhead migration routes. Eugene Brower, Sr., President of the Barrow Whaling Captains Association (BWCA), explains:

> [As the sea temperature rises and the ice goes away too early in the spring,] the whales are now swimming further north to get to their summer feeding ground. In the fall, we ought to sail out thirty to forty miles (forty-eight kilometers to sixty-four kilometers) off shore to do the fall whaling. It used to be just five miles (eight kilometers) [off the coast] at the most. Now we need more gas, time, energy to do this and getting out there is always more dangerous especially when the weather is not stable in the fall. (18 August, 2005)

Shifts in bowhead migration to the north makes whaling more expensive, requires more fuel, gas, gear, and time. Some whalers cannot afford to go whaling because of the expenses involved with this change. Although fall whaling now provides stable numbers of whales under recent conditions, it is a season with high waves and it is getting increasingly difficult to balance weather and desire to land the whale. During fall whaling in 2002, the ocean was rough and high. Malik, an old legendary whaler, died in the sea that year taken by violent waves while towing a whale to the shore. “He was taken by the weather and sea, and his spirit stays with the whale eternally,” Ben Akootchook later described (June 5, 2005). People of Barrow still talk about the funeral that took place at the Barrow High School gym. In Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, an eleven-year-old whaling apprentice was taken by the sea in 2005 when he was out with his uncle and four others in a walrus-skin boat, towing in a forty-ton bowhead whale when the winds shifted. A storm came up fast and the boat capsized. The cross on his coffin says: "Young man, buckshot, bowhead whale rider" (Block, 2005). The radical change in environment

undoubtedly threatens both human lives and continuity of the whaling cycle.

The timing of the ice-loving bowhead's migration has also been influenced. The sea ice goes away earlier each spring and the ice packs rarely come by September. J. C. Craig George, biologist with the NSB Department of Wildlife Management, remembers how solidly the ocean was frozen by early October in the late 1980s. On October 7, 1988, three gray whales were trapped in the icepack, just off of Point Barrow. The case was widely reported across the world and the United States federal government spent over five million United States dollars to save the whales with the cooperation of a Soviet ice breaker flying both the U.S. and Soviet flags off the stern. Nearly twenty years later, the ocean never freezes up by early October. This change is visible. With the warming of sea water temperature, the bowhead whales arrive earlier in northern Alaska in the spring and return from the Beaufort Sea later in the fall.

Whales also migrate in phases, grouped roughly by size. The whales of the first phase used to be significantly larger than that of the second wave, a fact long known by experienced hunters. But this pattern is reversed in the spring when the smaller whales are the first to appear (Bodenhorn, 2003; J. C. C. George, 2005). "My brother says he doesn't know when to hunt anymore," said Beverly Hugo of Barrow (20 June, 2005).

The uncertainties about bowhead biology also have to do with their prey availability in addition to sea ice conditions (Moore, 2000; Moore, MeMaster, and Dayton, 2000). Whales feed largely on zooplankton, small marine animals called copepods and krill, and their distribution determines whale movements and distribution. The Arctic food web is sustained by the oceanographic and biological conditions. Sunlight, currents, nutrients, winds, sea ice, water temperature and salinity, topography

on the seafloor, and other factors all conjoin in the right way at the right time in the right place to spur the growth of the tiny marine plants (phytoplankton) that feed the zooplankton that feed the whales. Recent sea-ice conditions are likely to have a major impact on their feeding areas (Finley, 2001).

The presence of "too many young whales" is a recent critical change observed among the bowhead by whalers (Joe Oktollik, 20 July, 2005). Warming seas temporarily boost zooplankton populations by fostering their food, phytoplankton. As a result, the bowheads' fertility rate temporarily increases because they prey on zooplankton, which the whales scoop up hundreds at a time and strain from sea water with their baleen plates (Willie Nashookpuk, 15 August, 2005). Many Iñupiaq whalers are currently happy with this change because it has increased the availability of *iŋatuk*, young female whales known for their tender and juicy *muktuk*. In fact, the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort stock of bowheads is expanding at a rate slightly lower than three percent per year (Reynolds, Moore, and Ragen, 2005). The real tragedy, however, awaits.

The delicately balanced ecosystem will change when a warming climate shifts oceanic conditions in the Arctic, and the whales may not continue to come to Barrow's coastal waters. Water temperature is the most important factor influencing zooplankton growth rates (Coyle and Pinchuk, 2002). No one knows exactly what will happen to the availability of the bowhead diet with continued warming. The bowheads could go away or disappear, as Joe Oktollik fears. "If climate change makes this a bad place for the bowhead whales to feed, it would be a huge change for these communities that depend on whale for subsistence," Carin Ashjian, biologist at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution observes (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 2007). Whaling captains are

also concerned about climate change disrupting the bowhead whales' migration as Eugene Brower, Sr. indicated. Physical environment also affects the reproductive cycle of whales. Bowheads may experience delayed onset of sexual maturation and low fecundity; since they are ice whales, they generally adapt poorly to changing conditions (Reynolds, Moore, and Ragen, 2005). Bowhead whales can break young ice with their heads in order to breathe in ice-covered areas, but their distribution is generally restricted to areas containing leads or polynyas and open-water areas at the periphery of the pack-ice zone.

Bowheads have evolved as ice whales with blow holes that allow them to breathe more easily in sea ice. It is not known if or how they could adjust to ice-free waters (Tyan and DeMaster, 1997). A plausible scenario has it that since bowhead whales are highly adapted with highly specialized feeding, they will simply lose their place in the Arctic Ocean (Reynolds, Moore, and Ragen, 2005). Furthermore, the potentially ice-free Arctic Ocean will open the major routes for increased shipping. Barges and ships will undoubtedly disturb bowhead migration, calf nursing, and general well-being. On the other hand, gray whale populations are growing at 2 to 3 percent per year and expanding their range as ice cover decreases. Gray whales have a broader diet, breed faster, and generally seem more capable of colonizing new areas than bowhead whales (Reynolds, Moore, and Ragen, 2005). Gray whales are smaller, more maneuverable, and known for fiercely ramming whale boats or striking at them with their tails. Their Alaska population was stable and numerous enough to support a hunt, but the Iñupiat rarely pursued them and do not have a legal quota. Being desperate to secure whale meat for their people, however, Little Diomede Yup'ik hunters attempted to hunt a gray, lost the battle and one person was killed in the Bering Sea in 2002.

Gray whales may outcompete and eventually replace bowhead whales. If so, what will the effects be on subsistence communities? “Gray whales? They make great steak, but ….” Richard Glenn gave me a bitter smile and continued: “No, we will only hunt the bowhead” (April 21, 2005).

Unexpected changes have appeared in other species as well, especially polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*; *nanuq*) and seals. Polar bears are influenced by disappearance of sea ice partly because they prey on the seals that make the ice their home. Polar bear distribution, health, and reproductive success are dependent on the maintenance of suitable sea-ice conditions in shallow, often coastal areas. *Ugruk*, the bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*), is an indispensable species in making an *umiak* and in turning the whaling cycle. They also face negative effects of climate change and started displaying their adaptation process. Reduction of the Arctic ice cover, less snowfall, lower snow depth, and warm temperatures in April and May affect seals that depend on sea ice for birthing, molting, and resting platforms. Decreased snowfall has had a direct impact on the population of pups born and surviving to adults (Ferguson, Stirling, and McLoughlin, 2005). Sally Killugvik, a whaling captain’s wife and traditional skin sewer of Point Hope comments:

> *Ugruk* skins are getting weird. Not as thick [as before]. The skin is now yellowish and has less hair. Maybe the water is getting too warm for them. That’s why they’re getting skinnier. That’s how they survive, alright. But thinner skins don’t make a safe *umiak* cover. Without good sealskins we can’t hunt whales anymore. (4 September, 2005)

The unstable shorefast ice condition is an additional concern for hunting. “During winter months, my family never stayed on the land. Fall was the time for us to move onto the ice and I used to do ice-fishing all the time. ” Looking at a photo of herself ice-fishing

in the 1950s, Vernal Stone looked out of her window. She continued:

> I'm getting old now, but I hear and feel how different it is out there [on the ice]. The sea never freezes up in October anymore. No ice-fishing until it gets really, really cold. But it doesn't get real cold anymore. My boys talk about how little time they can spend on the ice because of the weather and the thin ice. (20 August, 2005)

On the shorefast ice in the April rain, Ben Nageak said: "Now we have more rain than snow during the spring hunt" (18 April, 2005). As the frequent cold rain melts the ice, whalers worry about it breaking off into the ocean as they wait for the whales at their camps. The ice condition has become rough and unpredictable in the past decade (Jeslie Kaleak, Sr., 2 July, 2005). In recent years, the need for whaling crews to make quick escapes from breaking ice increased. George Ahmaogak, Sr. recollects a lesson that he learned from hard experience: "We now have to get used to dismantling the camp and loading the *umiak* quickly onto the sled in case something unexpected happened . . . .. If the ice breaks up when everyone is towing the whale, we would lose the whale and our lives altogether," shrugged George (20 September, 2005). "With these changes, how will you keep the connection with the whales?" I asked. "Gotta adapt," said George without any hesitation:

> The whales have been helping us with our subsistence. Now it's our turn to accept their changes. Overall, it is harder to go out to hunt now, but the bowhead keeps us alive and I don't think this relation will ever change in the future. Without whale hunt, our society will experience severe social disorder and nutritional problems and we have to hold onto our whaling. *Aġviq* (Bowhead whale), that's what we want. We have to find a right time to adapt to the change. Adaptation is a process, it's a subsistence process. (20 September, 2005)

My research collaborators' consensus is that the bowhead whale is irreplaceable and that the loss of the Iñupiat-whale relationship should never happen. "In order to keep our tie





Figures 4.18 — "Walk Away! All Hands!!" Towing a whale to the shorefast ice, Barrow (9 May, 2005)

with the whale," comments Kristi Frankson of Point Hope:

> [W]e will have to do things differently. [W]hatever happens or whatever it takes, the whale is in the center of our lives. I think this challenge [environmental problems caused by climatic change] makes our tie with the whale even stronger because now we think about the whales and care about them more than ever so that they keep coming back to us every spring. (3 September, 2005)

Once again, the Iñupiaq culture has been built upon changes. Richard Glenn says: "We will be here however things will change, and we're not afraid of change" (21 April, 2005). As the People of the Whales, Iñupiaq whalers keep their faith to survive this era of environmental transformation, but their anxiety toward an uncertain future has not dissolved completely. The Iñupiaq people are now trying to confront and survive the change by responding to threats with conscious and unconscious efforts to cope with the world. "There's no time to waste"—as Aku hurried me during my first hunting experience, "[i]t is high time for us, the Iñupiat, to face the situation."

Iñupiaq whalers are now obliged to make adjustments to their whaling cycle in order to accommodate these changes. Although changes in environment and climate bring immense impact upon subsistence activities, it is important to remember that hunting is just one manifestation of such. Other implications have been revealed in the rest of the annual cultural cycle as the remainder of this dissertation chapters suggest. These characteristics of the people appear to show an ability to successfully adapt and live in an inherently variable local environment. The real challenge with assessing the impact of climate change, however, is in trying to understand the interconnectedness and the wide-ranging impacts that collectively work to change the shape of the web of activities and life in the Arctic. The examples in the following chapters reveal how

Iñupiaq *cetaceousness*, as a set of adaptive strategies, may be constructed and demonstrated. My Iñupiaq collaborators emphasized that retaining whaling under a changing environment is a way to enliven their cultural identity so that it is not a mere static tradition of the past. All episodes show the importance of innovation to sustaining the relationship between shifts in environmental conditions and the conduct of whaling through time and across space. Iñupiat adaptability is a product of culturally informed social actions and emotions cultivated through their kinship with the whale and their land.

CHAPTER V
"OUR HOME IS DROWNING": IÑUPIAQ STORYTELLING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Standing at the tundra's edge, Pamiuq pointed out to the sea and showed me "the wound" where Raven harpooned the giant whale that created *Tikiġaq*, or the land of Point Hope. To this day, the villagers of Point Hope—*Tikiġaqmiut*— believe their land was once the sacred whale that became the foundation of the Iñupiaq world. When I looked out upon the landscape symbolizing the origin story of the Iñupiat, it was covered by rising seas. The wound that once gave life to land and land to life is now a buried scar reminding *Tikiġaqmiut* that their home is drowning and, with it perhaps, their way of life.

When the Iñupiat lost their primordial homeland to the sea in the 1970s, their village of *Tiġara* (today known as Old Town) was moved to its present location, New Town of Point Hope. Old Town, the symbol of deep Iñupiaq-whale relationships, is returning to the water. Old Town used to contain sod houses made of whale jawbones (see Figures 4.7 and 4.8). "The houses made us feel like living in the belly of a whale," said Pamiuq, 46. Though only two miles (3.2 kilometers) away from the original location to the southeast, the impersonal rectilinear grid that most of the *Tikiġaqmiut* relocated to only serves to remind them that their home lies elsewhere (Figure 5.1). Following continuous storms, flooding, and erosion, the place that rooted the Iñupiat to their land and the center of their universe is now underwater. As he pointed to the wound, Pamiuq, barely audible over the howling wind said, "I hear the ocean getting closer day by day." Born and raised in Old Town, Pamiuq is one of a handful of villagers who remains in his original family home: "I don't have anywhere else to go…. This [place] is all I am, and this is my home, nothing else. " As we spoke, waves heaved along the stony beach as if

to remind us that Pamiuq's home would soon be gone as well. As Old Town disappears into the sea, the Iñupiat spiritual relationship with the land and their cultural identity are threatened.

Point Hope is the northwesternmost settlement of North America and one of the longest continuously inhabited places in the Americas (Figure 5.2). Located approximately 125 miles (200 kilometers) north of the Arctic Circle, the Tikiġaq Peninsula has been occupied since 500 B.C.E. (Rainey, 1947; VanStone, 1962; Giddings, 1967; Foote, 1992; North Slope Borough, 2000). Created in 1977, New Town clings to the tip of the peninsula on a long spit of gravel jutting west into the Chukchi Sea. Point Hope's other name, *Tikiġaq*, means the index finger (Lowenstein, 1992), a finger that points toward the migration path of the bowhead whale. Not surprisingly the People of the Whales in Point Hope depend upon the bowhead for sustenance and cultural meaning.

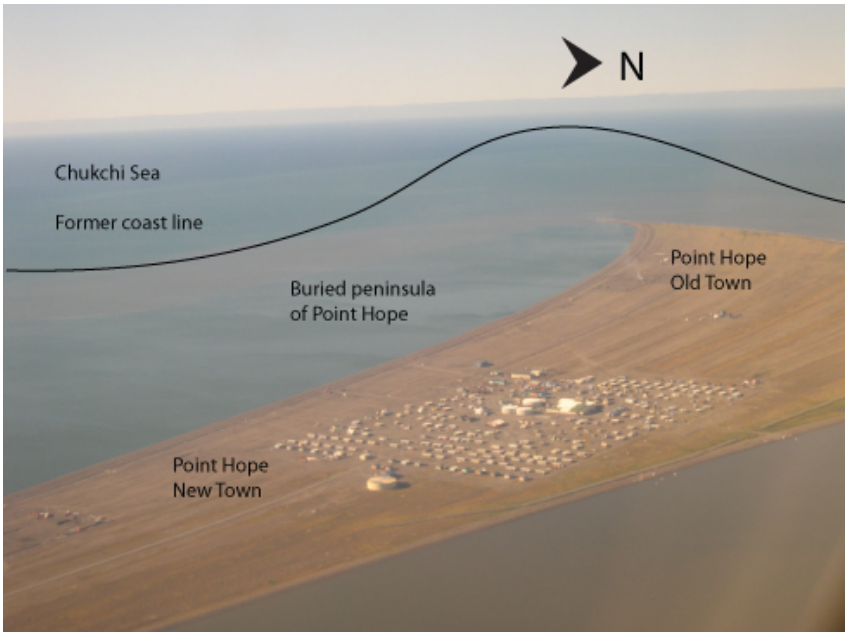


Figure 5.1—Aerial View of Point Hope, Alaska. (17 August, 2005)

In Point Hope, the Iñupiat homeland has been experiencing a major transition since even before the 1977 relocation from their original settlement. With the loss of more than seventy percent of its original homeland, Point Hope is one of the prime examples of changing communities, and it is just a matter of time before the remainder of Old Town vanishes into the Chukchi Sea. As sea levels have risen while Arctic ice has shrunk to its smallest size in a century, the rate of coastal erosion has been accelerating. Simultaneously, as the temperature warms, the frozen ground thaws and makes the Iñupiat homeland more vulnerable. Further, the shorefast ice retreats too soon and exposes more open water to the action of the wind, and brings waves toward the land. Normally, the ice provides a buffer for the coastline (George et al., 2004), but the land has become vulnerable without sea ice. The resulting coastal erosion is only increasing as the sea level is estimated to rise by nearly three inches (eight centimeters) every century due to warmer sea water and glacier melting (Weller, 2004; Overpeck, et al. , 2006). Worse, the rate of rise is increasing (Meiser and Dyurgerov, 2002; Chandler, 2005; Otto-Bliesner, et al., 2006; Overpeck, et al., 2006). The extreme circumstances have caused eighty-six percent of low-lying Alaskan villages to lose part of their settlements in the late twentieth century (Chandler, 2005). In Shishmaref, a village of 600 Iñupiat that lies on the fragile barrier island of Sarichef, the terrain is literally melting and residents have concluded permanent resettlement elsewhere is their only option, and the land of Point Hope is following the same fate. A 2004 Government Accountability Office report found that of Alaska's 213 Native villages, 184 are battling floods and erosion (Knoth and Whitty, 2007). Another assessment foresees that in the coming decades, Alaska will require 6.1 billion United States dollars to repair global warming's domino effect of

fallen bridges, burst sewer pipes, and disintegrating roads (Knoth and Whitty, 2007). In 2007, the Iñupiat are aware that they are standing on the northern front line of this worldwide climate change.

A vast sky shrouds the Arctic landscape where the Iñupiat dwell. Though there are no trees or shrubs anywhere, the tundra and gravel are full of life. The wide open space periodically penetrated by white whale jawbones reminds the visitor that the Arctic is home to people. These signs of the whale's death are ubiquitous and attest to the Iñupiat life (see Figure 1.3). These landscapes constantly reminded me of what I was told before I first arrived in Point Hope, "Beware, Point Hope is haunted." This sense of haunting, however, helped me to understand how the Iñupiat were coping with and responding to their disappearing homeland.



Figure 5.2— Location of Point Hope, Alaska.
Source: Tikiġaq Corporation (2007) http://www.tikigaq.com/home.shtml

In this chapter, I explore the ways that contemporary storytelling both reveals and helps people cope with an unpredictable future. During my time in Point Hope, I witnessed how Iñupiaq storytelling helps process environmental change; it is a form of cultural adaptation and a means of enacting an important dimension of *cetaceousness*. Iñupiaq storytelling confirms the villagers' tie with land and whale by involving a variety of spirit-beings. Although there are traditional archetypes of supernatural stories, my fieldwork confirmed that the characteristics of the spirit-beings have never been static. With the people's environment getting more unpredictable, the Iñupiat find themselves interacting with new spirit-beings in their drowning home.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, the 1977 Point Hope relocation marks a major shift in the direction of supernatural tales. Ernest S. Burch (1971), who conducted fieldwork in several Iñupiaq communities in the coastal district between Point Hope and Deering during 1969-1970 found that the villagers considered non-residential areas of the tundra to be haunted. Burch's study illustrates how widespread social changes altered Iñupiat spiritual experiences after the nineteenth century. He found that since many of the beliefs of early Christian missionaries were compatible with indigenous beliefs, the Iñupiat synthesized the two worlds to construct their adaptation to the new social climate. Burch emphasizes how this synthesis happened without eliminating "nonempirical beings" from the indigenous worldview. I found Burch's study valuable as there was substantial uniformity in the nature of composition of the "nonempirical" environment from his time to my fieldwork. My experience in Point Hope, however, convinced me that supernatural encounters are not necessarily perceived as "nonempirical," but are rather "empirical" to the Iñupiat; the stories are based on actual experiences that

manifested to *Tikiġaqmiut*'s senses and emotions.

Burch's stories were collected in Point Hope prior to the 1977 relocation, and my collaborators in Point Hope told me similar stories with certain changes and developments in 2005-2006. Still, I found several stories that used to exist but are no longer told or are no longer associated with personal experiences. I also found that the spatial distribution of humans and supernatural beings around Point Hope had been reversed since Burch's time. The place that was once "haunted" is now the people's home (New Town was built on the tundra), and the people's old home (Old Town) is now inhabited by spirit-beings (see Figure 5.1). Pamiuq as well as eleven other elderly collaborators who continue to call Old Town home pointed out to me that the spirit-beings have themselves become restless. This observation is becoming increasingly common among the *Tikiġaqmiut* storytellers, especially those who were born before the relocation. In addition to the twelve Old Town interviewees, many younger New Town villagers associated this shift with the unpredictable environment altered by continuous erosion, flooding, and storms. Moved by anxiety, villagers say, the spirit-beings have begun to migrate from the tundra to Old Town (Figure 5.3).

Prior to the current environmental change, most introductions affecting Iñupiaq culture and lifeways came from the lower 48: e.g., Christianity, snowmobiles, and canned food. Burch's study indicates that the Iñupiat have no trouble accepting these items into their lifestyles and making them their own. The people syncretically incorporated these outside influences and move them into an Iñupiaq identity that provided the basis for successful adaptation. This process of adaptation strengthened Iñupiat rootedness to a land of which they had been part since time immemorial. Indeed, *Tikiġaqmiut* are a proud

people who are deeply rooted to their land. The Iñupiat elaborately developed their kinship with their home by linking themselves through *Qalgis* (ceremonial space/building) and *sigluaqs* (permafrost cellars to accumulate whale meat), two vital components in whaling cycle activities.

Starting in the 1950s, this close kinship with the land was threatened. The threat came from the planned Project Chariot from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. Project Chariot was a 1958 proposal to construct an artificial harbor at Cape Thompson by means of a series of nuclear explosions. Point Hope was only thirty miles (fifty kilometers) from ground zero in the Ogotoruk Valley, and the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) wanted to relocated the villagers to Kotzebue or Nome after the blast. "We refused to move," said Elmer, who at the time was a youth in the village. *Tikiġaqmiut* began their vocal opposition to the project. Their strong leadership stirred public opinion, and the project was eventually cancelled in 1962 by the Kennedy Administration. "We belong to this land. We had to protect our land and we were successful," continued Elmer. Despite their confidence in protecting their land from ill-conceived policy threats, however, they know environmental degradation is different. With climate and related environmental changes, the fundamental basis of the Iñupiaq worldview and well-being—the land and the whale—are threatened, and they are now concerned that traditional modes of syncretic adaptation cannot succeed easily.

In this chapter, I discuss how *Tikiġaqmiut* process environmental change through the tradition of storytelling.[9] This act serves as a way to maintain connectivity to a disappearing place. In this context, storytelling is an expressive form of adaptation that

[9] The seismic survey for the five-year oil leasing that I mentioned in Chapter II happened after my fieldwork described in this chapter.

reflects environmental uncertainties and the long term well-being of the Iñupiat in their homeland. There is a reciprocal link between a human sense of place and of spirit-beings in a rapidly changing environment, and storytelling can be used as an adaptive coping mechanism. Storytelling is one form of *cetaceousness* with which people retain unity between themselves and the land—a powerful metaphor of the bowhead whale. The Iñupiat are masters at transforming their homes of snow, ice, tundra, gravel, and whales into humanized and habitated places, and storytelling is a powerful means of facilitating this process. For *Tikiġaqmiut*, the content of stories and the very act of narrating of them helps connect people to places, people to people, and ultimately people to whales. In this way, storytelling is a cultural form of communication that produces and reproduces a sense of place rooted in the land.

Through an examination of Iñupiaq storytelling, I describe how environmental change is culturally manifest through tales of the supernatural, particularly "spirit-beings" or "ghosts." Although folktales of northwest Alaska have been collected and published by a variety of authors since the late nineteenth century (Nelson, 1899; Curtis, 1930; Rasmussen, 1932; Ostermann, 1942; Lantis, 1946; Lucier, 1953, 1958; Gillham, 1955; Giddings, 1967; Ray, 1968; Hall, 1975; Lowenstein, 1992, 1993), scholars have not specifically focused on Arctic supernatural stories, much less their association with an indigenous sense of place. To discuss this, I divide this chapter into three sections. The first section examines how scholars have explored the relationships among environmental change, home, place, and storytelling. In the second section and the heart of this chapter, I illustrate Iñupiaq storytelling and the ways it both reveals and processes the changing spiritual landscape vis-à-vis its own transformation. The core of my argument is that the

nature of stories has changed after the relocation to reflect better ways to cope with an unpredictable environment. By using Burch's (1971) account and my interactions with contemporary *Tikiġaqmiut* as benchmarks to measure such change, I discuss how the nature of supernatural tales has shifted in the post-relocation phase. The third section describes the effects of climate change on Point Hope, which includes the loss of *Qalgi*—the sacred ceremonial places that spiritually and physically connect the people with the land—to the sea and thawing of the underground *sigluaqs*—the whale's home on land. I also summarize the recent history of Point Hope and the social organization of the Iñupiat people. I end by arguing that storytelling, by renewing the kinship between humans and their land, is a critical form of cultural adaptation that represents an enduring quality of Iñupiat lifeways. Although the rising sea may be eroding the ancestral land, storytelling weaves old and new homes into a viable place of cultural survival.

HOME IS WHERE THE STORY DWELLS

Geographers have long written about the relationship between home and narrative, and a sense of place as a product of the two (Tuan, 1974; Buttimer, 1976, 1990; Ley, 1977; Seamon, 1979; Sopher, 1979; Godkin, 1980; Seamon and Mugerauer, 1985; Porteous, 1990; Jackson, 1994; Gregson and Lowe, 1995; Ingold, 2000; Porteous and Smith, 2001; Bunkše, 2004). Places are meaningful locations of home and the cultivation of home through narration. Places are emotional embodiments of lifeways that are essential foundations of human culture. Many places are consecrated by memorials, or storied landscapes that shape and reflect the culture of the people they communicate with. People make homes and become rooted to places through narratives about both. When homes become threatened or moved, or places become transformed or uncertain, stories

necessarily capture and respond to the changes. A story about a drowning home is thus a reflection on a changing place, and a changing identity with, and uncertainty about, that place.

Storytelling is central in traditional indigenous and rural societies. As in many of these societies, storytelling in the Arctic teaches survival skills, passes down cultural knowledge, generates a respect for home, and ultimately helps maintain a sense of communal stability, a viable place (Lowenstein, 1993). Place-based stories are steeped in knowledge of places accumulated over time. Such stories connect people to their landscapes in three major ways. First, the storytelling tradition allows people to cultivate a strong sense of place, as "all stories are inseparable from places" (Silko, 1981, p. 54). Second, places that are remembered and cared for in stories form a dynamic part of people's identities. Societies in which places are retained and revered with stories are viewed as "healthy" in terms of people's relations with the land and the land's relations with people (Basso, 1996). Third, storytelling is a way for humans to communicate with non-humans who also dwell upon the land. Through the use of words and emotions, humans express their gratitude to animals and spirit-beings in private and public, either narrating appropriate hunting protocols to the young or exchanging stories of animal appreciation and reciprocity at public events such as a community whale feast. In this context, storytelling enables a collaborative reciprocity to form between humans and non-humans (Millman, 1987; Basso, 1996; Ingold, 2000). Storytelling is how people invest home and land with meaning, and how people make the invisible manifest (Tuan, 1979). This is how spirit-beings come into my own story.

By sharing experiences or recognizing supernatural phenomena, storytelling

makes one's home tangible, special, and unforgettable (Tuan, 1979). Stories about supernatural existence set aside a home from the rest of the world, and are an effective way to emotionally connect people to a place. Supernatural stories often include metamorphosis or inter-species transformation between people and animals. Such shape-shifting is a way to link or open the individual to his or her surroundings (Ingold, 2000). Acquiring the bodily forms of animals enables people to discuss, process, and ideally cope with environmental change by increasing physical strength, capabilities, and depths of interaction with the land (Ingold, 2000).

While the association between home and storytelling is widely accepted by scholars, what needs to be emphasized here is the reciprocal link between sense of place and spirit-beings in a rapidly changing environment, particularly the way that storytelling can be used as an adaptive mechanism to cope with climatic shifts. In this investigation, storytelling manifests the *cetaceousness* that people use to retain their unity with the land.

TIKIĠAQ STORYTELLING

One evening out of the blue, Laqu, 82, started describing what she had heard from her deceased husband about his hunting experiences and several other stories inherited from her long-deceased kin. Laqu was born and raised in a sod house, and learned the stories that she heard from her grandmother while sitting around a seal oil lamp. Her grandmother's house, where the storytelling took place, has already disappeared into water. In her stories, Laqu remained just a young girl thrilled by her grandmother's narrative.

When Laqu finished telling her stories, paused, and sipped her tea, Edna, 72, glanced at me and asked if Qutuq, her daughter, had shown me the "mysterious holes"

that suddenly appeared on the beach near Old Town. "*Ii* [Yes]," I answered, as it was only the day before when Qutuq had taken me out on her four-wheeler to study the holes. Standing on the beach that afternoon, Qutuq had looked concerned gazing down on the hollows and emphasized that she had never seen anything like them before. When I told Edna Qutuq was curious about the cause, Edna responded, "It's *inuqullit* [the Little People], they dug the holes to hide away from the waves." I almost laughed, but immediately realized how the audience went silent. Words failed me. "They're [Little People] now everywhere!" exclaimed Edna. The Little People of the Iñupiat are the equivalent of those who appear in stories of native peoples throughout North America; they are often said to live in forests, hills, rocky outcrops, riverbanks, or prairies. In the Iñupiaq world, the Little People are traditionally the residents of wide open tundra away from the sea. Just like their southern counterparts, the Little People of the High Arctic play pranks on humans or occasionally perform miracles. "They had never appeared this often [prior to the village relocation]. I don't know what's going on around here," Edna said. Others nodded in agreement and expressed their own concerns.

Apparently the Little People are now even more active on the coast. After my return to Oklahoma at the end of 2005, I talked with Laqu on the phone. She updated me on the spirit-being situation of the village. "You wanna know more about *inuqullit*?" she asked slowly. "What happened?" I said. "They're now trying to have their own whaling crew to get the whales for us." I was speechless. I visualized Laqu's soft smile on the other side of the phone line, being happy with the thought of *inuqullit umialik*. It was the moment when I realized the Little People may well be the supporters of the enduring Iñupiaq *cetaceousness*.

The storytelling by Laqu and Edna took place at a parsonage adjacent to one of the village churches. At the time of my stay, the parsonage was a major gathering place for women. The parsonage served as the place for them to catch up with one another and talk until past midnight after church services on Wednesday and Sunday evenings when they do not go hunting, fishing, or berry picking. During my first week in the village, Frieda, the daughter of a deceased whaling captain and the wife of a whaling crew member, took me to the parsonage to "hang out" with her friends. The central figures at the parsonage were Edna and Laqu. Both are widows of whaling captains and had inherited the title upon their husbands' decease. The two women were highly respected in the village because of their elderly status in addition to their efficient whaling captaincy in support of their crews. Other participants at the parsonage were the wives of whaling captains or crew members, and their ages varied from late twenties to late sixties. They made the get-together more delightful by being accompanied by their children or grandchildren. Most of the women brought sewing materials with them to be advised by the two elders as they worked and talked. The rest were simply there to hang out, drink tea and eat whale meat while exchanging gossip, doing jigsaw puzzles, and listening to stories. Edna and Laqu often sat on a large couch by the window and the rest of us sat on the carpeted floor. Every time I joined them, I had a good feeling just being there—the time felt cyclical, and something about the place made me feel I could be there forever with the women, stories, and native food.

In my fieldwork, Iñupiaq storytelling was not restricted to a particular social setting, but came out in all my conversations and interviews with the villagers. When I asked my collaborators to talk about Old Town, any children or grandchildren in the

household usually came to the table, sat down with us, and listened. They also asked questions, a vital component of traditional storytelling among the Iñupiat. My interviews often turned into narratives and social events. Spirit-being stories were always well-received, even if the stories were repeats or had sad or uncertain endings. While storytellers prefer to narrate in Iñupiaq—their first language—in the presence of me and other youngsters, they kindly did so in slow English with Iñupiaq accent and intonation, which is known as Village English. The rise and fall of the teller's voice and the darkness of the parsonage during the winter or summer twilight all combined to transmit the tension of the stories that often turned into excitement and hearty laughs. It was as if the storyteller transformed the room into a storied place in Old Town each time.

In Point Hope, the storytellers are mostly older Iñupiat who have lived in both Old Town and New Town. The audiences include all villagers and even visitors like myself who are welcomed generously. Iñupiaq society gives unconditional respect to elders, and the stories told by them are especially powerful. Elders always have company whether they live with their family or alone. Immediate family members, other relatives, and unrelated villagers watch after them, often visiting to bring fish, *muktuk*, berries, seal or caribou, and to sit down for a talk. During the long winter months, elders spend days, weeks, and months inside and become the core of a storytelling circle. The youngest of the participants usually serves tea or food to the other people present. By its very performance, storytelling is a valuable way to teach youth appropriate behavior and discipline in Iñupiaq society and prepare them for the following whaling season.

In my days, weeks, and months in Point Hope, I learned of possible roles stories play in contemporary Iñupiaq culture, such as how and where stories are told, who

storytellers are, whether an individual storyteller "owns" certain stories or the stories are shared among the villagers, and changes in stories and storytelling modes passed down from one individual or one generation to another. Traditionally, stories were told in someone's house or in clan *Qalgis* where Iñupiat affiliate themselves with the land through ceremonies, whaling preparation, and storytelling. Stories could also be told by hunters in whaling camps or during hunting trips. While anyone could tell any story, certain individuals or families were known for the number of stories they remembered and the manner in which they related them through *Qalgi* affiliations. In the case of Edna and Laqu, the parsonage served as a kind of common *Qalgi* for all women from the two different *Qalgi* affiliations of Point Hope, *Qagmaqtuuq* and *Uŋasiksikaaq*.

"To survive our long winter, there are two things that we Iñupiat must have: whale meat and good stories," said Lloyd. Stories are told and retold to make the long winter joyous and entertaining. Some stories define ideal Iñupiaq-environment relations; some indicate social problems or environmental stresses of the society; some reveal historical relations with other Iñupiaq groups. Stories also carry morality lessons. For example, a man who does not keep a promise with his wife will never be a successful hunter because his action offends the whales and instead, attracts hazardous weather. This incorporation of cultural codes into stories teaches the youth and serves as a constant reminder for all to make their survival in the harsh environment possible. Thus, "good stories" play a dual role—the stories entertain people and help them prevent foreseeable future problems.

STORIES OF THE LOST HOME

Recently, the nature of *Tikiġaq* storytelling has been going through a transition. The change in storytelling is especially pronounced by the shift in the distribution of spirit-beings. With their emotional and sensational appeal, supernatural stories give high visibility to places and human sense of place; as ghosts haunt places, the increasing number of supernatural tales, perceptions, and experiences set in the original settlement make their bond with Old Town more tangible.

In Point Hope, villagers die in their own home and their family maintains the whalebone family graveyard (see Figure 1.3). This custom makes human and non-human interactions a major part of living tradition. Burch (1971, p. 149) was intrigued with the perception of his informants "who were highly influenced by American ways, yet they still viewed reality in terms of much the same cognitive framework that had guided the activities of their ancestors." What Burch confirmed in his 1960s fieldwork had not changed by the twenty-first century—even younger generations who speak English as their first language do not generally doubt the existence of the supernatural. To the people, the stories are the basis of reality and storytelling has a power to make things that are half-believed true even among teenagers. In many Iñupiaq stories, there are no sharp distinctions between environment, deities, ancestors, and supernatural phenomena. Some express apprehension, others pleasure, but the supernatural phenomena are widely accepted as normal parts of everyday life.

Burch's account demonstrates the spatial distribution and characteristics of the stories about "nonempirical beings" at the time when *Tikiġaqmiut* were still settled in Old Town. Burch divided Iñupiaq spiritual phenomena into a number of categories based on shape: 1) nonempirical entities shaped like people; 2) nonempirical entities shaped like

animals; and 3) nonempirical entities having no particular shape. He then used these categories to classify several supernatural entities traditionally perceived by the Iñupiat, such as the Little People (*inuqullit*), wild baby (*iraaq/naaluŋiq*), troll (*iqsiniraq*), mermaid or beluga woman (*kunuŋnizaq/nuyakpalik*), shape-shifter (*iziraq*), dragon (*tiritsiq*), and the soul of a deceased person (*ilitqasiq*), among many others.

The Iñupiat homeland has always been filled with spirit-beings as much as living humans and animals. My findings suggest that as the Arctic environment is getting more unpredictable, so are the distribution and behavior of its spirit-beings. I found that the nature of spiritual encounters in Point Hope now bears different traits from those collected by Burch. These differences are particularly evident in personal qualities, encounter characteristics, and spatial distributions of supernatural appearances. Additionally, villagers' perceptions of spirit-beings have been changing. In the past, spirit-beings were often considered dangerous and opposed to humans, but the current environmental change seems to impact both humans' and spirit-beings' survival and well-being in the shared habitat. For example, *Tikiġaqmiut* no longer appear to feel they must "abandon the area within which the entity concerned operated, or certain death would result" (Burch, 1971, p.152). Traditionally, the Iñupiat avoided some good hunting or fishing areas because of spirit-beings. However, the Iñupiat are now making conscious and unconscious alliances with spirit-beings to remain rooted in their land.

Overall, current villagers' experiences differ from Burch's account especially because they pointed to non-residential areas such as the tundra (including the area of Old Town) as being haunted. This geographic inversion is confirmed by local hunters. Although Old Town is basically a non-residential area now, spirit-beings have been

widely witnessed there as villagers visit *sigluaqs* or wander around the nearby tundra in search of ground squirrels or other prey. I will group the stories that I collected in 2005-2006 following Burch's classification to demonstrate the fact that there are differences between pre- and post-relocation phases in Point Hope, which coincide with the period of drastic environmental transformation caused by storms, flooding, and erosion.

1. Spirit-beings shaped like people.

Burch gives several examples under this category in roughly decreasing order of their similarity to human beings: the Little People (*inuqullit*), wild baby (*iraaq/ naaluŋiq*), troll (*iqsiniraq*), mermaid (*kunuŋnizaq/ nuyakpalik*), invisible person (*iziraq/ nuliayuq*), and ghost with vague facial features (*aliuqtuq*). Before the village relocation, such spirit-beings were mostly seen in non-residential areas outside of Old Town. In 2005 and 2006, the reported areas of the supernatural encounters were concentrated inside the sparsely populated Old Town. "Now it's just in Old Town this happens," said Tom, a villager in his late forties who claimed to have seen shape-shifters. To Tom, Old Town is where his heart is, and he commutes from his current home in New Town to eroding Old Town with his dogs on a daily basis. One day in early September, I ran into Tom as I cruised the tundra on a four-wheeler. I saw him as a tiny dot over the horizon at first. Waving at me, he was on his way to pick salmon berries by the Marryat Inlet. "Watch out for brown bears and *inuqullit*!" Tom said each time he saw me. As we started chatting, Donald the hunter came up to us and joined our conversation. "Uqut (Tom's Iñupiaq name), well, what was it you were talking about the other day? You saw a woman?" Donald prompted. In response, by the coast of the original settlement, Tom started telling

us how he had seen a beluga whale transform itself into a young slender woman and an owl transform into an elderly bearded man under the moonlight. “Yeah, it’s fall again,” said Donald. They said that fall is the time when spirit-beings are witnessed most frequently. “What’s so special about fall?” I asked. “It’s time for us to get ready for winter. We need to hunt, fish, check our *siqluaq*, and pick berries before it snows. We’re busy and restless as tundra turns its colors, you know. Ghosts, too, get restless and show up around here … they often forget they’re dead or [forget that] they’re not human because they are too busy.” As Tom explained, Donald nodded his head and did not seem to be surprised or be skeptical at all. Tom continued:

> And look at the colors of the sky and the sea; the winds blow very strongly and waves are very high this time of year. We ought to live with weather, and there’s no guarantee what happens tomorrow. That’s why we are restless in the fall, and no doubt ghosts get restless, too, to prepare for the winter.

From our conversation, I got a sense of how the Iñupiat link human subsistence, weather, and environmental conditions with characteristics of spirit-beings.

Regardless of the timeframe and the location of the Point Hope village, the stories of the Little People are ubiquitous. The characteristics of the Little People, however, exhibit certain degrees of transformation between the two phases. Iqiḷan, a hunter in his late thirties who spent the first few years of his life in Old Town, told me: “The Little People didn’t really come to town with us when I was a kid, but last year, me and my brother saw them in Old Town. We went to clean our *sigluaq* there, and [we] were surprised [to run into them]. ” In 2005 and 2006, the Little People were frequently reported to appear in the eroding old settlement, whereas they had rarely been seen near the coast in the past (Burch, 1971). According to Iqiḷan, when he and his brother popped

up their heads from their *sigluaq*, there were at least a few Little People in old-style Iñupiaq clothing standing in front of them.

> They were about three-feet tall, weren't as short as I'd heard from my *aapa* (grandfather). I thought they wanted to talk with us about something, but they had no voice. We saw them move their mouths, but no sound came out…. Am I joking? No way, other guys in town also saw them last summer.

Iqiḷan's description supports Tom's view that Old Town is now being taken over by spirit-beings. It gave me the impression that Old Town was a "ghost town" that had never been abandoned. As the villagers were forced to leave, their drowning home was re-occupied by spirit-beings who, in their eyes, seem to care for it in their absence. "I believe that [the existence of the Little People]," said Beth, 17, a Tikigaq High School senior. "I know three people who saw them, and they are my age. I have seen their foot prints, too. My *aaka* [grandmother] saw them on the beach. She saw them coming up from the ocean … yes, it was the beach by Old Town, but they didn't talk."

Samuel, an elderly hunter who took one of the Little People from Old Town to New Town, witnessed this type of spirit-being:

> It was like fifteen years ago or so, I believe. After a fall storm, I found him there nursing a baby on a rock [in Old Town]. The Little Person mingled with us until its baby went into the ear of a [dead] caribou and [was] eaten by one of our dogs. Then the little one went away … [he] was gone for awhile. Seemed like he didn't know where to go or what to do, he sure was lost! But now they are coming back up.

Interestingly many of the villagers' experiences with the Little People correspond with one another with characteristics and sighting locations of the spirit-beings. Through the

manifestations of these beings and people's stories about them, *Tikiġaqmiut* recognize a new face of their home.

While the Little People stories have been widely acknowledged and are still powerful in Point Hope, I had an impression that other spirit-beings in this category have been on decline. Troll (*iqisiniraq*), otherwise described as the "old man of the mountain" (Burch, 1971, p.153), has become uncommon and is almost extinct although the name still rings a bell with elderly *Tikiġaqmiut*. Anonymous ghosts that used to be common up to the 1970s seemed to have shared the same fate. I asked around to find out what had happened to the trolls. Unlike the Little People, the troll had been known for his hostility against humans. He used to grab a human and seize his or her soul. "*Atchu* (I don't know), they're long gone. It's the survival of the fittest, isn't it?" Samuel said as we walked across Old Town. As Laqu told me on the phone, I felt that special missions are now assigned to the Little People to help *Tikiġaqmiut* maintain their engagement with the changing world.

2. Spirit-beings shaped like animals (*Iqsinaqtuq*)

Burch gives two basic types for "nonempirical" entities (*iqsinaqtuq*) in the shape of animals: 1) creatures identical to animals as we would perceive them but ten to one hundred times or more their normal size; and 2) giant creatures that are shaped like animals but not like any animals within the everyday Iñupiaq experience. These creatures were all regarded as highly dangerous, and their territories had to be avoided. Such examples include giant fish (*aqluqpakpak*), an eagle-like giant bird (*tiŋmiaqpak*), giant shrew (*ugzunakpak*), and the giant mouse (*aviŋakpak*). Just like the disappearance of the troll and the survival of the Little People that were witnessed in the first category, the

"survival of the fittest" is a phrase applied to the category of the animal-shaped spirit-beings, too. Burch reports that the dragons (*tiritsiq*) spend most of their lives in large lakes, and there were only three places where they were reported to have lived in the nineteenth century. Although Burch did not associate Point Hope with any dragon stories, several villagers indicated that they were familiar with the story and that their deceased kin had talked about the creature as real. At Burch's time, these dragons were witnessed in only one lagoon behind Cape Krusenstern along the Chukchi Sea coast. "I've seen tracks along the shore when I was a kid. Dragons? That's what you call them? I heard it was like a huge water snake …" said Samuel, "Or maybe alligators? Anyhow, they are all gone now." "Why did they disappear?" I became curious. "Oh, their lagoons drained and they lost their water, they became homeless and died out or decided to leave," said Samuel. Arctic lakes grow and drain over time in response to climate change and other factors.[10] These lakes may expand and their drainage rates and processes change with subsequent impacts on the global carbon cycle. The basin eventually drains because of ice wedge erosion, stream piracy, coastal erosion, or bank overflow. Global warming will almost certainly influence changes in the intensity of geomorphic processes and affect landscape evolution (Hinkel, Jones, et al., 2007), depriving the legendary dragon of its habitat. Changes in the soil thermal and moisture regimes could have profound impacts on vegetation and foraging animals that translate to the Iñupiat and their association with spirit-beings. The disappearance of the dragon exemplifies how Iñupiat find connectivity between their storytelling and change in their physical environment, intersecting their traditional worldviews with scientific analyses.

[10] Research on the western Arctic Coastal Plain (WACP) in which lakes drain by a variety of episodic processes, including coastal erosion, stream meandering, and headward scanner has been reported by Hinkel, Jones, et al. (2007).

3. Spirit-beings having no particular shape.

The Iñupiaq world is also populated by entities which have no particular shape, either because they are invisible or because they have variable shapes. Most strikingly, the personal qualities of supernatural encounters had increased in 2005 compared to the 1971 stories, which tend to exhibit traditional and generic features of Iñupiat supernatural encounters with anonymous spirits or unidentified entities. In fact, I rarely came across stories about impersonal or anonymous spirit-beings with no particular shapes, as the spirits are now able to communicate with humans directly in Old Town. In 2005, spirit-beings became more identifiable (such as one's deceased parent, grandparent, or sibling), their characteristics turned more distinctive, and they began to have specific linkages with the general Old Town site or a particular house associated with a certain family. As Dora, an elder, told it, "Old Town is where I communicate with ravens … they also showed me how to walk on the ice [safely] when I was a kid." Some villagers feel that Old Town enables cross-species communication. "They know our language in Old Town, I feel it…. There's really something about Old Town. " Dora continued:

> It was a cloudy day. Very windy. One time after we moved to this New Town, I went back to my parents' house [in Old Town] to pick up something …. I was alone. Both my mom and dad were long gone by then. They are both buried in the whalebone graveyard. When I went in to the house, I heard someone knock on the window. It was a raven looking in. When I looked up at it, the sun came out quickly and the light came in from the window … it was so bright. I thought I went blind. Then I saw something in the light. I saw my mom's hand. It was just a hand, but I knew it was hers and I saw it clearly. "Don't remember bad things that you did [in Old Town], but remember only good things that you did. We'll be staying here forever," then she disappeared." I cried because she was always talking to me even when she was dying. Then I felt a wind, and I thought it was my mom touching my hair that way. It was real. This only happened in Old Town. And I know, I'm not the only one who has this [kind of] experience.

As Dora's encounter with her mother's spirit, which can be attributed to classification of spirits with no particular shape in Old Town indicates, separation and anxiety go hand in hand with important animals and places, demonstrating the spatial manifestation of cultural adjustment to change.

While this is not specifically attributed to spirit-being, dreaming in Old Town also helps many people retain ties to their old home and the deceased: "I had a dream of my dead uncle there in Old Town. He was my favorite uncle and I think of him often, but I never saw him even in my dreams here. " Dorothy, the wife of a retired whaling captain, told me that dreaming is a way to communicate with the spirit-beings, and this is possible only in Old Town. Dorothy dreams and contacts the spirit world in an abandoned house that belonged to her family. "I sure miss Old Town. The place has a special power. How I wished I could hold onto it, but…" then she looked away from me. From these stories, it appears that the sentimental longing toward the disappearing Iñupiat old home facilitated their communications with spirits who represent the identity and memories of the ancestral homeland. While the symbolic relationship between the villagers and environment remains at the heart of the telling, the stories are becoming more matter-of-fact and less metaphorical. They are increasingly based on the direct experiences of the narrator or on the stories that he or she heard from other villagers. This change in the storytelling format suggests a new immediacy of the Iñupiat fear of losing Old Town and all that it stands for.

DROWNING HOME: CLIMATE CHANGE AND POINT HOPE

"Our home is drowning." Isaac paused his hands while weaving a baleen basket and glancing at a black-and-white photograph of his parents taken in Old Town in the late 1960s. Looking down at his baleen basket once again, Isaac continued:

> The Point used to be way out. Water came one day, and everything was gone afterwards. All gone. The life in Old Town was a pretty good life. Clean. Everything was under the snow in the winter and the grass in the summer. Now we are all on the gravel in New Town, everything is dusty and bumpy. Nothing was like this when I was growing up.

By the beginning of my fieldwork in 2004, most *Tikiġaqmiut* had been physically detached from Old Town. Emotionally, however, their sense of place and longing for their old home remained intact. Most villagers above thirty-five years old whom I spoke with still consider Old Town home. Unexpectedly, I too felt a strong attachment with the original settlement. "Do I want to go back? Sure, of course, if the land ever comes back up," Isaac said. The relocation gave the villagers long-lasting emotional trauma. "Overnight, everything was gone. Bang, a storm took our houses one right after another," Isaac described. The younger generations who were born in the post-relocation phase are also incorporated into this intimate human-land kinship through stories which they inherit from their parents, grandparents, other relatives, and community elders. Through stories, the disappearing homeland firmly anchors itself in the villagers' souls. Storytelling thus ties lived homes to more abstract and complicated places entangled with emotions, memories, and the strong sense of belonging. It is a way to unify the villagers to their two homes, Old Town and New Town, as well as to their memories and current recognition of their changing environment.



Figure 5.3—Point Hole Old Town. (5 September, 2005)

In terms of the link now acknowledged between global warming and their drowning home, however, the villagers were originally confused. “Our planet is getting warmer, we understand it now very well” said Steven, 68.

> But you know, our grandparents used to say no two winters were the same …. We used to think, in the year of poor whaling or sealing, the animals decided to spend time on the Siberian side for several years before they come back to us. When we have them around here, we thought our relatives in Siberia shouldn’t be able to find them in their sea. But now, we all know we are having crazy kind of change here in Alaska. The same thing in Russia, they say. There was no time like this when all our animals are changing so fast. Not just animals, but everything that we had in the past around us is changing. Our home is getting eaten by the water, you see.

Laqu, the elderly female whaling captain, also agrees with Steven that there is a definite link between their drowning home and climate change:

> Our home is taken because this land was the whale. Our land thinks it is going through a rough time of change on the ground. It misses water, cold water. But even our ice is melting and going away, you see. Our whaling will be harder with less land and less ice.

Sea level rise is a prominent example of climate change in northern Alaska; it contributed to the drowning of low elevation villages, especially north of the Brooks Range. "What's going on is [the] destruction of an oldest, oldest continuously known people. You're looking at them right now, you're sitting here at the oldest place in North America," said Rayna, 68. Point Hope also contains some of the richest archaeological resources in Alaska that confirm the route that the ancestors of today's Native Americans took millenia ago. Because of rising seas, the coast is eroding, washing away forever precious artifacts and human memories along with history.



Figure 5.4—"Our Earth is Melting!" Caroline and Richard Cannon, Sr. hauling up water caused by permafrost melt to clear their crew's *sigluaq*. Tiġara site, Old Town, Point Hope (20 August, 2005)

*SIGLUAQ*S AND *QALGI*S

The rising sea and the thawing tundra also bring crucial change to the places that have been vital for the Iñupiat to sustain their storytelling tradition. As discussed in Chapter IV, Iñupiat traditional lifeways are deeply intertwined with the annual whaling cycle (see Figure 4.1). Within this cycle, *sigluaqs*, or underground permafrost cellars, play a symbolic role in keeping the human-land-whale triad alive and healthy. A *sigluaq* is a traditional place to preserve food, particularly whale meat following a successful hunt. People say that the whale will not give itself to them unless there is a clean place for it to rest: a *sigluaq* is the whale's home on land. It is owned by a whaling captain, and each whaling family has one *sigluaq*. An entrance of one-meter (three feet) square is guarded by a heavy wooden cover. Below is a ladder that goes down to the bottom to keep the underground temperature approximately minus twelve degrees Celsius (ten degrees Fahrenheit) year round. Although the Arctic earth is covered with tundra and contoured by permafrost, prior to the introduction of power equipment, the people patiently chiseled, chipped, and dug the frozen ground to make enough space for their whale (Figure 5.4). At Point Hope, there are no *sigluaqs* in New Town. Although the encroachment of the sea and the thawing of the tundra make the maintenance of the Old Town *sigluaqs* increasingly difficult, the villagers make pilgrimages to Old Town to store and access their whale meat (Figure 5.4). Frieda explained the importance of *sigluaqs*:

> We still go back to Old Town; that's where we keep our whale. For our *sigluaqs*, we use many whalebones to support the chamber, and when you look inside, it almost looks like we store the whale meat inside a whale's stomach. With the cellars, we didn't need refrigerators as long as we kept them clean before and after the [whaling] season. Cleaning the cellar is important because it is a way for us to pay respect to the whales. They like a clean home. But we will lose all our *sigluaqs* very soon because of the ocean and flooding …. The cellars are melting,

too. It's getting warmer inside! It had never been a problem, but now, we have to go [to] Old Town to haul up water by bucket from the cellar because the permafrost is thawing out. Otherwise, our whale meat will all go bad …. Will we need a big freezer in the future? I don't know.

As Frieda explains, the land and the whale are one entity, and the Iñupiat are part of both. However, the integrity of Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* is increasingly jeopardized as *sigluaq* destruction accelerates.

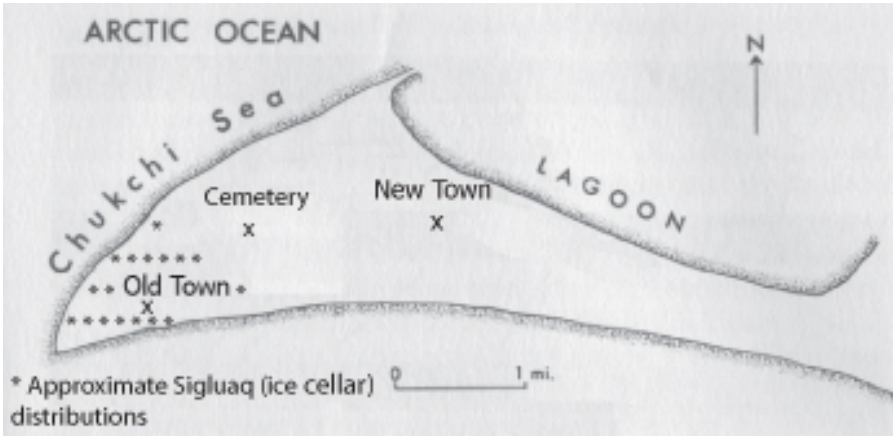


Figure 5.5— Point Hope Old Town and New Town. Modified from Giddings (1967)

Above all during my fieldwork, what I felt most strongly was community concerns about their drowning homeland. This could have been the result of my questions or what people knew I wanted to hear about. Yet, I sensed something more: a genuine fear about an unpredictable future. These concerns were made clear through the villagers' direct statements as well as their metaphorical narratives that involved spirit-beings. In addition to the loss of land and the destruction of *sigluaqs*, recent environmental changes have also resulted in the disruption of the social clan system based on *Qalgi*, a clan-related ceremonial ground that traditionally included whalebone buildings (see Chapter IV; Figures 4.5 and 4.6). In Point Hope, there were historically seven clans, each

with its own *Qalgi* or sacred meeting ground, but five of them no longer exist due to the loss of their *Qalgis* to the ocean prior to the village relocation in 1977. Many stories that directly linked *Tikiġaqmiut* to these *Qalgis* also disappeared into the sea. The loss of a *Qalgi* erodes a sense of belonging anchored in the clan system. After the destruction of *Qalgis*, the people who had been left behind have since been absorbed into the remaining two clans, *Qagmaqtuuq* and *Uŋasiksikaaq*. Both clans have created *Qalgis* in New Town after the relocation as an effort to establish new kinship with the new settlement.

The 1977 relocation of the village site caused severe emotional turmoil among the villagers. Tuguluk, a hunter in his 50s, recalled his grandmother who passed away in New Town in the 1990s:

> My grandmother resisted to move [to New Town] until the very last minute. She said that she wanted to stay in the sod house … [she knew it was dangerous to stay there, but] that's where she was born. But she was taken down to New Town. She died before visiting her sod house again. It is only two miles [between Old Town and New Town], but if you are old and don't know how to ride a Honda [a four-wheeler used in the summer time], the walk can be tough on you. I feel the same way now because of my age and walking problems. The removal was very sad.

The memories of Old Town stay in their hearts. At age 74, Flossie remembered the house in which she was born, which is now under water. "I still remember my favorite doll, but I might have left it in our old house. Whenever I think of my [deceased] parents, I think of Old Town, and feel really sad. " Flossie could never associate her parents with the current village as New Town did not exist during their lifetimes. "I didn't want to move," said Qalu, who is in her 80s, one of the oldest villagers in Point Hope. To her, Old Town was where she was born, grew up, got married, gave birth to all her children, buried her ancestors, and where she believes that her people belong—Old Town remains her home to this day. "I fear the Tikiġaq Peninsula will be completely taken [by water] by the time

of my great-grandchildren. I fear what will become of where our ancestors are buried. Our cemetery." Qalu felt her heart when she mentioned that it was also a matter of time before the people lose their current settlement, which is fortified with stone break walls and gravel to alleviate erosion from wave action. These narratives of the villagers about their past and possible future home loss, however, could nevertheless resuscitate a sense of home and a sense of place through their memories and telling.

This chapter suggests that contemporary storytelling among the Iñupiaq people of Point Hope seeks to cope with an unpredictable future. Climate change in the Arctic impacts Iñupiat lifeways on a cultural level by threatening their homeland, sense of place, and respect for the whale. Expediting the destruction of *Qalgis* and *sigluaqs*—two crucial places in the whaling cycle—environmental change challenges the survival of traditional social institutions. What I found during my fieldwork was that environmental changes were culturally processed through the tradition of storytelling and storytelling served as a way to maintain connectivity to a disappearing place. The types of stories and modes of telling them revealed people's uncertainty towards the future based on knowledge of the immediate past. With their environment getting more unpredictable, the Iñupiat are forced to confront new spirit-beings in their drowning home. Examining how the villagers perceive the loss of their homeland, I argue that Iñupiaq storytelling both reveals and helps them adapt to changing physical and spiritual landscapes. The Iñupiat memory stays alive with their home, and the drowning home is to be remembered as the storytelling practice keeps the Iñupiat kinship with the land visible and tangible as a cultural form of communication. The sea may be eroding the Iñupiat land, but storytelling weaves old and new homes into a viable place of cultural survival.

CHAPTER VI
"NO WHALE, NO MUSIC": IÑUPIAQ PERFORMANCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

"*Aarigaa*, Happy Thanksgiving, my Japanese-Eskimo girl!" I ran into Nasuk at the Thanksgiving feast at the Ukpeaġvik Presbyterian Church. It was 2004, my first winter in Barrow. A few days before, the village had entered the long night that would last until late January. Holding his youngest grandson in his arms, Nasuk was in good spirits. "*Quyanaq* [Thanks], Nasuk. Will you drum-dance tonight?" I asked. In Iñupiaq communities, a musical performance always follows a feast and begins the following stage of the whaling cycle. A respected whaling captain, Nasuk was known as a skilled traditional dancer. Thus I was perplexed by his reply: "No dance for me—our crew didn't catch any whales this year. No whale, no music." That spring, Barrow had experienced a challenging whaling season with only six whales landed, and Nasuk's family was not among the successful crews. Although the fall hunt compensated for the insufficient spring outcome, Nasuk's crew was again unable to land a whale. Moreover, many whalers appreciate spring whales more than fall whales because of the spiritually heightened and physically intimate interactions with the whales under extreme conditions. "Hunt on the ice, that's what makes our whaling real and special"—so I was once told by a retired whaling captain.

For village performances, according to Iñupiaq custom, it is only the successful *umialik* and their crew who formally dance for the whale. While everyone else was invited to join the dancing circle after the successful *umialiks* performed their dance at the Thanksgiving feast, Nasuk was determined to remain a spectator that evening. Hearing the drumbeat and feeling its throb fill the space, I sat by Nasuk on the cold floor

of the high school gymnasium. Casting a quick glance at me, he said calmly: “Keep this in mind. It is the whale who brings us music. You need to be chosen by the whale to be a good dancer and a captain.”

As climate change inevitably evokes cultural transformation in Iñupiaq communities, tension is transmitted to the levels of human emotion and continuity of expressive culture in various ways. In this chapter, I discuss how Iñupiaq musical practices during the annual whaling cycle have been impacted by variable whale harvests, and conversely, how such cultural manifestations are themselves being revealed by associated changes. In so doing, I illustrate some of the ways in which musical performance like singing, dancing, and drumming, provide the means for the Iñupiat to construct and mobilize their *cetaceousness*. Through my personal interactions with Iñupiaq performers, I found their music is not a static relic of past cultural heritage, but rather a dynamic emblem of innovation and adaptation to adversity. As climate change leads cultural change in Iñupiaq communities, human emotions produce new forms of expressive culture. During my personal interactions with Iñupiaq performers during my dissertation fieldwork I found that music was not a static relic of past cultural heritage, but rather a medium of innovation. Among the Iñupiat, musical performance is a means of adapting to environmental transformation. In my view, performative culture serves as a means to express concerns about and adapt to environmental changes. The People of the Whales are now attempting to cope with current and future uncertainties through modifications of performance. Iñupiaq performance strengthens their relationship with the whales, and further, provides a way of coping with a world in which they seek to survive.

The heart of this chapter describes Iñupiat emotional responses to recent environmental problems that directly impact the continuity of traditional performance, especially that of the whale-related events which involve drum music. Traditionally, it is through performativity that fundamental aspects of the whale-centric social organization are recognized, that social time is ritually articulated, and that an entire whaling cycle is completed. Thus, the core of my argument is that the current crisis in whaling strengthens Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* through a shift of mindset and emotion to deal with the devastating situation, and through modifications in performance and ceremonies. Performance, with its deep emotional resonance, allows the Iñupiat to transcend their boundaries with the whales, especially at this time of continuous change in their environment. In the third and final section of this chapter, I describe the imprints of climate change in the whaling cycle and how Iñupiaq performers are surviving the challenge.

PERFORMANCE, ENVIRONMENT, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

In recent years, geographers have begun to redefine music as a vital medium of human experience as well as a humanistic way of understanding the world not just as a cultural product (Porteous, 1990; Attali, 1995; Frith, 1996; Wood, 2002). As our emotions are deeply entwined with musical experiences and imagination, music invests our world with specific feelings, and also cultivates a communal tie and human identity (Seeger, 1987; Stokes, 1997). Among all our human sensory experiences, music is an especially emotive phenomenon through which we experience and express our sense of place filled with sentiments (Wood, 2002). Music contributes to the making of collective identity, and its rootedness in place informs our sense of place by evoking collective

memories and sentiments. Ceremonial performances that include music are not static subjects, but are themselves social and cultural contexts that bring people together and within which other things happen (Waterman, 1990; Stokes, 1997).

Music, song, and dance make us feel in touch with an essential part of ourselves—our emotions and our rootedness in a community (Schutz, 1977; Stokes, 1997). People get together for musical performances by taking the roles of musicians, dancers, and/or audiences. Music and dance are often inseparable, and special food and drink often establish communal musical events as a vital and pleasurable part of cultural identity. In Iñupiaq understanding, it is the whale who brings them this joy and pleasure all together. In other words, the whale is the source of all musical performance, inspiration, instruments, and nourishing ceremonial and communal food. When Iñupiaq villagers get together to celebrate the whale, pleasure and emotional heightening are always involved in the presence of the sacred animal.

Ethnomusicologists have frequently studied how music transforms itself in contexts of social change, such as how we use music to cope with outside influences and dominant forces at cultural and humanistic levels, especially the response of performers in "small" communities to the encroachments of the outside world (Stokes, 1997; Baumann, 1987). For example, Gerd Baumann's study of the Miri of Northern Sudan focuses on reintegration among the people to illustrate how the Miri attempted to recreate their community in their own terms using songs and dance in the face of the expansion of the Sudanese state, the Arabic language, and Islam into the Miri hills. The Miri "domesticated" the outside world through music as a process of human adaptation at a cultural level. The incorporation and domestication of music difference is an essential

process of musical ethnicity. Similarly, the Iñupiat seek to accommodate outside influences through their flexible performativity. In this context, performance serves as an adaptive mechanism and a cornerstone of *cetaceousness*. I observed how this adaptation process is becoming almost an automatic reaction among the Iñupiaq musicians and participants of the whaling cycle to cope with dominant outside forces and environmental problems that directly impact their *cetaceousness*-based ceremonial continuity.

THE CALL OF THE WHALE DRUM

In Iñupiaq performance, the drum encapsulates many aspects of Arctic life and serves a number of functions to heighten Iñupiaq-whale relations. It was once a vehicle for the shaman's spiritual journeys, and could also be used for geographical orientation (Lowenstein, 1992, 1993). The whaling cycle rotates around the drumbeat as Iñupiat dance and sing for the whale. Such a simple definition, however, fails to do justice to the importance of performance as a whole, which is an embodiment of *cetaceousness*. Ernie Frankson, Sr., a whaling captain of Point Hope and the leader of the Tikiġaq Traditional Dancers, pointed out that in the Iñupiaq lifeworld, the drum is the whale and the whale is the drum (2 September, 2005).

The logo of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (Figure 6.1), a stylized drum designed by Greenlandic artist Ninan Spore Kreutzmann, symbolizes the unity among the Arctic peoples. Besides being a common instrument employed across the Arctic, the northern drum is a pan-Arctic symbol of harmonious relations. Drums are symbolic of the inseparability among humans, animals, and Arctic environment.



Figure 6.1—Inuit Circumpolar Conference Logo

The drum is the sole musical instrument among Iñupiat, aside from their vocals. Iñupiaq music is drum music, and the drum is cared for, respected, and ritually fed with fresh water. Feeding the drum with fresh water is important to keep the membrane moist, and there is a metaphorical parallel with the custom of feeding a hunted whale with fresh water to quench its thirst. In appreciation, the whale begins another journey of life and eventually returns to the village in the following year. Fannie Akpik, a traditional performer and the organizer of the *Nuvukmiut* Dance Group of Barrow, explained that feeding water to the drum by the *umialik*'s wife is reenacted through performance by her husband, her children, her crew members, and everyone in the community who sings, drums, dances, and shares the fruits of the hunt (10 July, 2005). "Our drum speaks the language of the whale through our performance," Akpik continued. Diana Oktollik, a whaler's wife in Point Hope, gave the metaphor of the drumbeat as the Iñupiaq heartbeat, which indicates the long-perceived kinship between the people and the whales (18 August,

2005).

The drum membrane is often made of linings of whale livers, stomachs, or lungs (Figure 6.2). According to Ernie Frankson, Sr., the whale membrane makes a thin yet durable surface by being stretched on a round wooden frame (2 September, 2005). In this way, the whale, by giving up its life, gains an eternal life as the musical instrument. In the whaling cycle, before and after the annual hunting season, men and women conduct an elaborate series of rituals accompanied by the whale drum and the human voice. This symbolic and collaborative reciprocity culminates in the actual whale hunt in which the whale gives itself to the respectful hunters.

On many occasions, Iñupiaq performers act out their kinship with the whales through the drum dance. The inseparability of whaling crews and music is demonstrated by *umialiks* who are also skilled drummers, singers, and dancers, and are responsible for organizing and performing drum dances. In Barrow, two major traditional whale feasts in the whaling cycle are *Apaġauti*, a feast that is held on the icy beach to conclude the spring whaling, and *Nalukataq*, the midsummer highlight of the cycle of life (see Figure 4.1). In Point Hope, *Apaġauti* is part of their three-day *Nalukataq*. Thanksgiving and Christmas have also become an integral part of the villagers' lifeways, replacing the original events that historically had taken place in similar timeframes (Turner, 1993).

Drumbeats emotionally facilitate dialogues between human and animal characters in their accompaniment of tales, lullabies, syllables, and lyrical songs. Akpik stated: "Drum music opens the communication between humans and whales" (10 July, 2005). George Kingik, former mayor of Point Hope, explained this interspecies communication brings invaluable lessons to whalers:

> Drumming and whaling are one. Music—like our songs and dance—teach us how to wait for the whale, [how] to communicate with the whale, [how to] harpoon the whale, [what to do] after the hunt, [and how] to pay respect to the whale. These respects [toward the whale] all grew out of our drumming tradition. (20 August, 2005)



Figure 6.2 – Washing Whale Stomach Skin for Drum-Making. Standing on the sea ice, an Aalaak crew member (captained by Eugene Brower, Sr.) washes a piece of the fresh whale stomach skin in preparation for the drum-making. (6 May, 2005)

As the drum calls the animals, hunters may use hunting songs to lure and capture them (Johnston, 1977; Reimer, 1999; Brewster, 2004). The connectivity between the drums and the whales is also revealed in an origin story of the Iñupiaq drum songs. Frankson elaborates:

> Animals come around with drums. All our songs and drum beats were originally inherited from animals. That's why all rituals exist: to retain animal spirits in the drums. Songs are [the] agent, [the] mother of all animals, and they can be demanding because [drums] need good care and respect like animals. We have to sing animals' songs. If we do, they will come near. Materials are acquired in our life from animals, and all rituals are for them [to appreciate their existence in our life]. We use their bones for shelter, skins for drums and clothing, meat for food.

> When animals are caught, killed and taken home, they should be treated as a guest in the house. Animals we kill become the guests of the house and need to be pleased with their songs and drums. (2 September, 2005)

Songs are the gifts from the animals, and hunters and their families are responsible for entertaining their animal spirit guests. Drum performances activate powerful interactions between performers and animal spirits. This reciprocity is strongly reflected in the revitalized tradition of *Kivġiq*, the Messenger's Feast. *Kivġiq* invites other community members to exchange songs, dances, and gifts (Riccio 1993, 2003) (also see Chapter III). According to the late Vincent Nageak, Sr., an elder of Barrow, animals brought this event to the Iñupiat (North Slope Borough, 1993 [1975]). Until then, there was no music or drums among the Iñupiat. This reciprocity between animals and music is particularly pronounced between the whales and the Iñupiat. Willie Nashookpuk, a whaling captain of Point Hope, elaborated upon the strong ties among the whales, dances, songs, and hunters:

> Whale songs are attributed to [whaling] families, and [each] whaling crew needs to have [its] own dance. These songs and dances came from the whales. When you catch a whale, take out [its] flesh and breathe life into it—then you would be blessed with powerful songs. There are many songs that came out of this custom. (15 August, 2005)

Rex Okakok, Sr. of Barrow explained the kinship between the whale and the drum music by confirming the Iñupiat rootedness to their land:

> If you eat a whale, you need to return to the place [where you consumed the whale]. If you hear the drum music, you need to return to the place; we are connected to our home through a bloodline with the whale. Our ancestors

> cultivated kinship with the whale and their place through our ceremonial relation with the whales. That's why we sing for the whales and drum for them…. The whale is our food and music, and the whale is who we are. (2 July, 2005)

The whale and the Iñupiaq identity become interchangeable through a continuous drumbeat. Okakok's interpretation particularly draws a parallel with the land-whale story of Point Hope in which the whale is the origin of the Iñupiat homeland.

Through words or simply syllables, songs also unify the Iñupiat and the whales. Recalling the historical bladder feast, which missionaries later replaced with Thanksgiving, Majuaq, an Iñupiaq elder, told Knud Rasmussen in the 1920s how intimately the ceremony had tied songs to their whales:

> Every autumn, we held big feasts for the soul of the [whale], feasts which should always be opened with new songs which the men composed. The spirits were to be summoned with fresh words; worn-out songs could never be used when men and women danced and sang in homage to the big quarry. (Rasmussen, 1952, p. 102)

Majuaq stated that until the appropriate words came into his people's minds, they needed to sit in deep silence and darkness so as not to disturb the whale spirit. Rasmussen continues to cite Majuaq:

> It was this stillness we called *qarrtsiluni*, which means that one waits for something to burst. For our forefathers believed that the songs were born in this stillness, we all endeavored to think of nothing but beautiful things. Then they take shape in the minds of men and rise up like bubbles from the depths, of the sea, bubbles seeking the air in order to burst. That is how the sacred songs are made! (In Rasmussen, 1952, p. 102)

Songs and whales are the blessings from the sea. The whale drum performance develops this relation through the melding of human voices and drumbeat in the coastal communities. Similarly, Iñupiaq drumming is a process of putting various lives together by assembling several animal body parts. While the major drum membrane medium is the whale, the drum historically had a decorated handle made from walrus tusk (now the handle is often made of driftwood). This handle connects the human body and the instrument (the whale) as the player grips it, and symbolically links humans, whales, and sea. Just like Sedna, the Arctic sea goddess whose body parts turned into Arctic sea mammals, the drum is a composite being.

With a few exceptions, the text of the drum dance song is often meager. Within the song texts, words are interspersed with syllables. Many songs have only the syllables *eya*, or *ha-ya* or *aayaaa-yaayaa* or *yaiyaa*, all of which refer to the action of singing (Fannie Akpik, 10 July, 2005). The audience is usually familiar enough with the songs and their subjects to fill in most of the meaning (Fannie Akpik, 10 July, 2005). This frequent use of syllables—a shared musical trait with their circumpolar neighbors—emphasizes feelings, emotions, and "fill[s] in incomplete thoughts" to add further humanistic elements that are not necessarily based on a predetermined system.

"Our songs are all about whaling. We speak to whales through drums and the drums bring us whales." As Okakok explained, if the performers respond to the animals and dance for them, the animals return to the Iñupiat. Whale-related drum performances fill the entire fall, winter, and early spring, bringing Iñupiaq whalers a full circle into the following whaling season. This cyclical understanding of music-animal integrality anchors performativity in the center of the whaling cycle.

Qalgi provides the ceremonial space for Iñupiaq performativity. In ceremonial contexts, *Qalgi* may refer to either indoor or outdoor space or clan-related land. The term may also refer to a dance house built on ceremonial ground (Larson, 1995). In the past, inflated marine mammal bladders hung in the *Qalgi* contained *iñua*, the spirits (Fitzhugh and Kaplan, 1982). After the feast, the marine mammal bladders were returned to the sea through an ice hole for merciful reincarnation (Fitzhugh and Kaplan, 1982). Recently, *Qalgi*s have been set up at school gymnasiums, but the nature of events remains the same. At the *Qalgi*, the villagers sing songs and perform the drum dance to please the whale spirit. In fact, whaling songs and drum music for the whales are composed at *Qalgis* and belong to the *Qalgi* site or land. Therefore, when Old Town of Point Hope lost five *Qalgis* to the sea, the songs and dances of the *Qalgis* disappeared with the land (see Chapter V). Regarding the relationship between performance and cultural identity, Diana Oktollik remarked:

> Important songs and dances have sunk into the sea … but in gatherings. . . our songs and dance continue to provide a special enlightenment, a special happiness. We must carry on our tradition to survive, even if it means to change our ways a little. (18 August, 2005)

The Iñupiaq happiness in the post-whaling phase is most clearly demonstrated in *Nalukataq*, the midsummer highlight of the whaling cycle celebrated with sharing of food, music, and performance at *Qalgi*s.

NALUKATAQ

Physical and spiritual Iñupiaq-whale relationships are best revealed by *Nalukataq*, the major celebration of the whaling cycle. *Nalukataq* occurs in late June just as the sun is moving toward the summer solstice. The whale gives itself to the hunter, and the hunter then gives it to the participants in the feast. As the spring whaling winds down in late May, the crews that landed whales begin the preparation for *Nalukataq*, which involves at least an intensive one-month preparation period to get everything right. Men hunt geese, caribou, and seals to acquire meat to serve on *Nalukataq* in honor of the whales. Night and day, women process and cut up chunks of *muktuk*, whale meat, and any wild game brought home by mainly the male members of their whaling crews. The successful captain's wife has her own responsibility to make *mikiġaq* (fermented whale meat and *muktuk*), which requires constant care and attention. In 2005, it turned out to be the busiest summer for me as I belonged to two whaling crews who harvested whales that May. For the first time I used an *ulu* (a semi-circular woman's knife used in the circumpolar world) to process *muktuk*, to clean intestines, and to separate fat from meat. My untrained eyes were often confused too easily to differentiate fat and meat. The families were patient with my clumsiness and kindly explained the customary process.

The day before *Nalukataq* was the busiest and the toughest of the series of work completed in the post-whaling phase. During more than ten straight hours of cooking since the white dawn, we prepared *muktuk*, red meat, heart, kidney, tongue, intestines, caribou (*tutu*) soup, fried bread (*ugsrukuaataq*; also called "Eskimo doughnuts"), stewed fruit, and *akutuq* (or "Eskimo ice cream"—a mixture of melted caribou fat and finely ground caribou meat). After days of little sleep, hard labor, and extreme excitement, everyone was drained but happy when everything was ready for serving.

On a *Nalukataq* day, visitors come from other North Slope villages, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and as far away as the "Lower 48" to enjoy the good food, music, and festivity under the midnight sun. The event develops as the successful whaling crews serve food to the villagers and visitors in outdoor *Qalgi*s. The occasion confirms traditional interspecies connectedness as the whale is complemented with frozen white fish, walrus, duck, geese, caribou and other game as well as the humans who appreciate these animals. The Iñupiat themselves become the whale through consumption of the whale. On my first *Nalukataq* day, I was soon convinced the People of the Whales were indeed made of the bowhead whales with the endless consumption and appreciation of them. All day the participants sit down on their *Qalgi* ground to enjoy this cycle of life (Figure 6.3). I should emphasize that no alcohol is served at these events as the North Slope Borough voted itself dry in 1980.

Occasionally, Iñupiaq hymns or gospel songs are sung in accompaniment of a guitar and a banjo to heighten the excitement during the day at the *Qalgi* (Figure 6.4); the music shifts to the traditional drumbeat toward the end of the day. This musical duality reminds us of the tenacious Iñupiaq adaptability that ultimately encapsulated Christianity and technology into their traditional whale-centered worldview. In spite of radical changes that the Iñupiat experienced on different levels after the nineteenth century, the core of the traditional performance—especially the link between music and the whales—remains culturally intact (Fannie Akpik, 10 July, 2005; Ernie Frankson, Sr., 2 September, 2005). While most mask dance and animistic ceremonies were banned as shamanistic, the Iñupiat managed to retain drums as the only and most powerful instrument of their expressive tradition. On Thanksgiving and Christmas, the villagers

hold feasts at village churches during the day and the dancers head out to their *Qalgis* for drum dance in the evening. In spite of the separation of space between a church (gospel) and a *Qalgi* (drum music), both elements are now unified and are inseparable in the making of contemporary Iñupiaq lifeways as a whole.



Figure 6.3—Consumption of the Whale at *Qalgi*, Barrow. Saaŋiaq Rexford from Kaktovik feeding her son Isaiah a piece of whale meat while waiting for another round of serving. (28 June, 2005)

On a *Nalukataq* day, once the serving is done, the crew members go home to put on their new parkas and special boots called *mukluks,* made of caribou, wolf, and seal skins. *Nalukataq* literally means the "blanket toss" or "dancing in the air" (Rainey, 1947; Zumwalt, 1988). Everyone takes pleasure in being bounced into the air on a "blanket" (Figure 6.5). The blanket is made from the bearded seal skin cover of an old *umiak* that has been removed and converted into a large circular or rectangular tarp with sturdy rope handles. The blanket later covers the *Qalgi* ground for the communal drum dance.

Successful *umialiks* and their crews are the first to be tossed up into the air. They throw gifts of candy and chewing gum from the air. Sounds of excitement and admiration for the jumper's height, flexibility, grace, and style, as well as laughter for those who fall awkwardly fill the outdoor *Qalgi* space. Before my first blanket toss, Mae Ahgeak—the PK-13 Crew *umialik*'s wife and my adopted mother—advised me to move my arms in the styled manner of drum dancing and keep my head erect, my gaze toward the horizon, and my feet moving as if I was running. In spite of all her advice, upon being tossed up about fifteen feet (five meters) in the air, I screamed and cried in terror. From the sky, I saw the midnight sun brilliantly reflecting upon the Arctic Ocean. Honestly, it was the most terrifying yet beautifully charged moment I have ever had. When everyone's feet finally grow too numb to keep bouncing on the blanket, the *Nalukataq* day culminates with the drum dance, the festive conclusion of the ceremonial feast. In this occasion, the people leave the ceremonial outdoor *Qalgi* to a larger indoor space such as a high school gym.



Figure 6.4—*Qalgi* filled with Iñupiaq Gospel Music, Barrow. (25 June, 2005)



Figure 6.5—Blanket Toss. (20 June, 2005) Gary Hopson of Barrow dances in the air near midnight.

DRUMMING FOR THE WHALES

A traditional Iñupiaq drum dance consists of a number of drummers, from five to twenty, mostly males organized around prominent whaling captains. Drummers are also singers, and line one side of the performance space, sitting on chairs, the floor or the ground with their feet stretched in front of them. Behind them sit their wives to support them in chorus. Dancers stand in front of them (Figure 6.6). Akpik described the movements and choreography of the hands, arms, head, and legs that characterize the Iñupiaq performance as evocative of and inspired by animal behavior (10 July, 2005). Dorcas Rock of Point Hope pointed out that many dance movements depict harpooning, stalking, shooting, butchering, hanging meat or skins, and skin sewing (28 August, 2005). Male participants often cry out “Ooh ooh” in excitement, sounding like a walrus grunt. The same cry is also heard on the sea ice after a whale hunt (also see Chapter IV),

metaphorically bringing the sea to the land.



Figure 6.6—A Drum Dance Scene, Point Hope (16 October, 2005)

Such performance reenacts the whale hunt. As Rock and Akpik confirmed, the most common theme in Iñupiaq performance is hunting, which is accompanied by active dancing (Williams, 1996). Other popular themes include folktales about ancient heroes, legendary figures, mysterious animals, and non-human beings (Dorcas Rock, 28 August, 2005). In honor of the whale, Akpik tells me, all dancers must wear gloves to show respect so that the "ancient hunting spirits and [animal spirits] could stay in the dancers' bodies" (10 July, 2005) (Figure 6.7).



Figure 6.7—Point Hope Dancers with Gloves (1 September, 2005)

Drums are held in the left hand and are beaten with thin flexible wooden beaters held in the right. As the beater strikes the frame, it produces a series of rap sounds. Between each pair of drummers, there is a water bottle to keep the drumhead moist while it is played (Figure 6.8). This arrangement gives greater resonance to the tone and protects the fragile membrane from being torn, as well as reminds the players of how the whale should be fed with fresh water after the hunt.



Figure 6.8—Feeding Drum with Fresh Water. Ernie Frankson, Sr. spreading a bottle of water on his whale-skin drum. (Point Hope, 1 September, 2005)

Both drummers and dancers dress in proper dancing attire, usually *mukluks* and a long over-garment called an *attigluk* or snow dress. The dancing begins when a man, usually a successful whaling captain, steps out to the center, faces the drummers, and puts on his gloves. After his dance, another man, often a co-captain, steps forward. The single dancing is usually followed by motion dancing (*sayuun*) performed by two or more people, often *umialiks* (Figure 6.9).



Figure 6.9—*Sayuun* Performed by Tony Kaleak and Kumak Tuvak. (Barrow, 14 September, 2005)

The late David Frankson noted *sayuun* songs contain "meaningful words" (David Frankson in Johnston, 1976). As Ernie Frankson, Sr., the son of David, told me, this dance ends with a whaler's dance in which all whaling captains perform. Eventually the floor becomes open to everyone for group dancing (*attuutipiaq*) (Ernie Frankson, Sr., 2 September, 2005). *Attutipiaq* is a song with or without meaningful words where dancers are free to create their own movements (Figure 6.10).



Figure 6.10—*Attutipiaq* (Barrow, 16 October, 2005)

Taliun is a song women and girls dance to while sitting on the floor or in chairs facing each others' backs and moving their arms and hands in fixed patterns, reenacting the role of an *umialik*'s wife (Figure 6.11).



Figure 6.11—*Taliun* (Point Hope, 1 September, 2005)

Attugaurat is an improvisational fun dance like *attuutipiaq* with a faster rhythm (Ernie Frankson, 2 September, 2005) (Figure 6.12). The Iñupiat enjoy a variety of dance,

drumming, and singing through the night, bonding them within and beyond the village unit on festive occasions.



Figure 6.12—*Attugaurat* (Point Hope, 1 September, 2005)

The productive 2005 spring whaling season in both Barrow and Point Hope brought a very vibrant summer to these whaling villages. With sixteen whales landed, Barrow had four *Nalukataq* days, each hosted by three to four successful crews. The villagers shared the whales, acknowledged the bounty, and enjoyed the blanket toss. The drum dance in Barrow, however, had been cancelled due to continuous deaths in the village for the first three nights of *Nalukataq*. Julia and Jeslie Kaleak, Sr., one of the *umialik*s whose crew gave up its dance, opined that this decision was out of respect to Christianity (20 July, 2005). However, the joy and gratitude to the whales broke out the very last night. Eugene Brower, Sr., one of the successful whaling *umialik*s who co-hosted the last *Nalukataq* day with other captains, expressed his view:

> Drum dance is a [crucial part of] the cycle of life that has to come at the end of each celebration. This is a whaling ceremonial that needs to continue, and we have to finish this cycle. Our people's passing is sad, but we can't change what has happened in the village. What's more important is we have to carry on and dance to finish the cycle to keep getting the whales back to us next season. (29 June, 2005)

The emphasis here is on the continuity of the whaling cycle. On the last *Nalukataq* night, a drum dance took place in the outdoor *Qalgi* immediately following the blanket toss. It was so spontaneous that it seemed like the emotional flows of the whalers could never be regulated. Although the execution of the drum dance was never announced to the public in advance, the drumbeat immediately lured many villagers into the circle. It was a spectacular scene. I saw the drummers and dancers metaphorically transform themselves into the whales through drumbeat and body movement. "*Aarigaa* [Feels good]! This is a whale of a time!" I heard someone exclaim in the crowd. The phrase convinced me that the dance penetrates into another life and into the whale's domain to reinforce the connectivity between the dancers and the celebrated whales. The drumbeat kept the village awake, excited, and enlivened until dawn raised the sun that had stayed shining low over the northern horizon throughout the night.

In the same year in Point Hope, five successful whaling crews that had landed seven whales participated in their own *Qalgis* according to clan affiliation. Their *Nalukataq* continued for three full days, involving all villagers and visitors in appreciating the whales through elaborated rituals and performance. The communal fulfillment was revealed in the blanket toss and eventually in the drum dance. "*Aarigaa*!" echoed all over. Since a drum dance also functions to welcome newcomers to the village, many *Tikiġaqmiut* helped me get ready for the occasion. In Point Hope, sharing the whale

and blanket tossing take place in the two separate *Qalgis*. After the feast is over, the two clans from the two ceremonial grounds get together in one location for the drum dance. For this celebration, Tikiġaq High School gymnasium usually serves as a festive indoor *Qalgi* to embrace both clans in one spot. The drum dances in both Barrow and Point Hope felt like continuing into another productive whaling season for the following year. This active whaling cycle, however, was broken rather abruptly in early 2006 with unexpected sea ice conditions (see Chapter IV).

WHALES, PERFORMANCE, AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The cultural continuity of the North Slope villages was disturbed in spring 2006 due to the impoverished whaling season (Table 6.1). The unsuccessful whale harvest during the 2006 spring season is distinctive within a larger historical perspective of whaling seasons because of the local recognition of explicit causal links between changing environment and accessibility to the whales. “It was one of the most impoverished seasons across the North Slope Borough coastal whaling communities for the past thirty-five years,” recalled an elderly whaling captain (23 June, 2006). “We, the Iñupiat, have faced difficult seasons before and have had, of course, to adapt. But it had never been bad this much.” This situation sheds light on the three major problems that Iñupiaq performativity confronts today: anticipated struggles in acquirng drum-membrane materials, disturbances in the timing of whale-related ceremonies, and more seriously, in the continuity of ceremonies themselves. However, the Iñupiat attempt to cope with these new challenges with their traditional cultural expressions of continuous drumming.

Table 6. 1—Bowhead Whale Harvest Rate and its Link to the Drum Dance in Barrow and Point Hope

	Spring 2005			Spring 2006		
Villages	**Harvest #**	***Nalukataq***	**Dance**	**Harvest #**	***Nalukataq***	**Dance**
Barrow	16 whales	4 days	Yes	3 whales	1 day	No
Pt. Hope	7 whales	3 days	Yes	0 whale	0 day	No

The whale drum definitely remains at the core of Iñupiaq performativity, and climate change inevitably impacts the production of drums by influencing the level of whaling success. One anticipated problem is the shortage of whale stomachs and liver-linings. Pete Frankson of Point Hope noted: "Whales get us dance. Whale skin is the best material for our drums" (19 June, 2006). Frankson fears that difficulties in obtaining the correct material would directly devastate Iñupiaq cultural survival and would eventually decimate the drumming tradition. In fact, the zero whale harvest in 2006 brought the Point Hopers no fresh supplies of whale membranes for the year. As Ernie Frankson, Sr. stated earlier, the whale-skin drums need meticulous care to maintain good condition. Dry Arctic air often makes the material fragile, and frequent repair or complete replacement of a membrane needs to be planned ahead of time. Additionally, in spite of its immense size, the portion of the whale stomach that can be used ideally for drum-making is limited (Pete Frankson, 19 June, 2006). Considering the relatively large number of drums (five to twenty) required for ceremonial occasions, the decline in whale harvest may result in a serious loss of this crucial medium.

Some Barrow drummers have explored using heavy plastic material for the drumhead, otherwise known as "parachute drums," to replace hard-to-obtain animal body parts (Johnston, 1977; Pete Frankson, 19 June 2006). Pete Frankson states:

> I heard this from my uncle. Robert's (his distant cousin) *aapa* (grandfather) experimented on nylon or plastic material that Navy folks brought over to NARL (the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory) after the war. One day [at a camp], he made a drum out of it, a drum that never gets old or gets torn. This [synthetic membrane] may not sound as good as the real whale …. but it sure was a drum. It helps us carry out our tradition and carries the same symbolism at the time of this whaling problem. I don't think it replaces our spirituality. The drum still means the whale to us and we keep playing this at *Nalukataq* and other festivals in celebration of the whale. (19 September, 2005)

In Barrow today, the use of plastic membranes now exceeds that of whale livers or stomach skins. However, Willie Nashookpuk, Sr. along with other Point Hope drummers resists the use of synthetic materials to replace the whale membrane: "The sound can never be the same, and I'm worried that our kids will lose track of the real meaning of our drums if they were not made of the whales" (15 August, 2005). To this day, when we hear the drums of Point Hope, we are hearing the bowhead whale, as drummers in the village have completely rejected plastic drum skins and continue to use membranes of bowhead organs. Feeling the whale membrane of his drum, however, Nashookpuk commented reluctantly: "Does this give the impression that we have lost our fight? Well, but I guess we have to deal with the change, just to survive this moment. Who knows about the future?" (15 August, 2005) This transformation may have to become inevitable among the Point Hope performers soon if traditional whaling continues to suffer.

In addition to the membrane crisis, the continuity and even existence of whale-related ceremonies have also been threatened. When the spring hunt in 2006 turned into misery and brought no celebration to Point Hope, this situation severely affected the emotions of *Tikiġaqmiut*. Sally Killugvik of Point Hope told me: "Oh I cried and cried, because there was no whale! My husband was stressed, depressed, and so was everyone else in the crew and the village, it wasn't good" (9 July, 2006). A young mother

who is a dancer in the village noted: "We were practicing Eskimo Dance all winter, so it was a big, big disappointment [that we couldn't host *Nalukataq*]. My five-year-old boy missed his first chance to sing, too" (16 June, 2006). The 2006 situation was as devastating in Barrow. Prior to my trip to Barrow in May 2006, one of my adopted Iñupiaq sisters and a whaler's wife, Susie Oyagak, updated me on the Barrow whaling: "We haven't caught [any] whales so far, not even one yet." Susie then expressed her concern with the low harvest efficiency that spring across the North Slope. At the time, the spring bowhead whale migration period was already half over. Shortly after our correspondence, Susie and her husband's crew caught a whale and became one of the three successful crews among the forty-one active Barrow crews. Nevertheless, upon my arrival in Barrow on May 14, it was not the village that I had known the year before. The People of the Whales were dispirited. Anxiety, uncertainty and fatigue swallowed the entire community under the dull cloudy sky. I felt how the community was about to lose its balance.

By influencing human-whale relations, drastic environmental changes cause social disharmony in the whaling cycle. In 2006, the drum dance to celebrate the whales did not occur in either Barrow or Point Hope, and Point Hope was unable to host any *Nalukataq* at all. Barrow hosted only one *Nalukataq*, in honor of the three whales they had managed to land. At this feast, naturally, the quantity of whale meat in distribution was small compared to the year before. Additionally, with only three crews hosting the feast, despite their every effort and enthusiasm, the event itself appeared less vibrant. All crews related to the successful *umialiks* helped out to lead the feast to success, but undoubtedly the ratio of servers to served was out of balance. The drum dance was

originally to follow the feast and blanket toss at night, but it was called off due to a tragic suicide in the village, and was never rescheduled for a later time. In both Barrow and Point Hope, the 2006 devastation in whaling confirmed that the environment is a potent factor in determining the shape of Iñupiaq musical performance and even the retention of their cultural identity (see Table 6. 1).

While it is the most significant event in the whaling cycle, *Nalukataq* is not the only ceremonial occasion that is vulnerable to environmental change. As the oldest community of Iñupiaq country, Point Hope is blessed with a distinctive set of ceremonies and rituals that have been passed down in the village for centuries. In early fall of a successful whaling year, the villagers traditionally enjoy *Qiñu*, the "born of ice" ceremony in appreciation of the whale's tail (*akikkaq*), at each *Qalgi*. For *Qiñu*, when a whale is caught in the spring, its tail is cut off and then brought to a place near the captain's *sigluaq* and covered with *muktuk*. The ceremony is a renewal, deeply tied to subsistence activities and held in honor of the whale's spirit. Accompanied by an overnight drum performance, the *Qiñu* ceremony expresses gratitude to the whale and lets the whalers make a full circle into the following whaling season.

As its name and seasonality indicate, *Qiñu* is reliant upon the environmental cycle and can only be conducted when the first slush ice touches the shore of Point Hope. As the unpredictability of the climate increases and the formation of fall sea ice is delayed from late September to early November, many aspects of this sea-ice related ceremony now need to be delayed, modified, or eliminated (Sally Killugvik, 4 September, 2005; Esther Frankson, 20 August, 2005). Esther Frankson, elder of the community and a female whaling captain, shared her concern with me: "We are not allowed to start our

preparation for the following whaling season until the completion of *Qiñu*" (20 August, 2005). More seriously, Suuyuk Lane, Sr., another elder, told me that the permafrost melting of *sigluaq* spoils the sacred *akikkaq* while it is being stored, which endangers the continuity of the ceremony itself (20 August, 2005).

Another major facet of Iñupiaq lifeways threatened by unexpected change is mutual trust among community members. On my way to Point Hope at the small community airport in Barrow, I ran into a Point Hope villager with whom I had been acquainted the year before. As we waited on board before our departure, casually I asked: "Why do you think Point Hope had such a hard whaling season?" "Um, they say some family broke taboo and gave away the secret that belonged only to the village. They broke our taboo, and the whales heard them and became angry at us altogether. They [the family] were so inconsiderate." In the ceremonial *Qalgi*, unique yet strict taboos exist during the performance. For example, if anyone speaks ill of the whale or behaves inappropriately, the whale spirit would become offended and stay away from Point Hope the next whaling season; thus there would be neither feast nor music for that cycle.

In fact, some villagers largely attributed the 2006 whaling collapse to taboo-breaking in the community during a ceremonial dance. Tension arose because some villagers were concerned that someone revealed the secrets of the ceremony were revealed to outsiders. In Point Hope, I visited with the family being accused of giving away the secret. "At this time with all sorts of worries and problems, my brothers and I thought the dance and ceremony should be documented so that our children and grandchildren can refer back to it in the future. It is our heritage as much as our whaling," a family member said. Uncertainties about the environment and the future undoubtedly

broke the community into a dispute, and the villagers' minds were dwelling on what they should or should not do to retain their *cetaceousness*. An unsuccessful whaling venture deprives the Iñupiat of festivities and trust. At Point Hope in 2006, it planted substantial uncertainties and mutual distrust that disrupted communal unity, breaking the continuity of the whaling cycle.

CULTURAL SURVIVAL AND DRUMMING FOR THE WHALES

"No whale, no music"—Nasuk's voice inadvertently came back to me during the 2006 spring whaling. The Iñupiat of Barrow, in spite of their unproductive whaling, invited *Tikiġaqmiut*, other NSB villagers, and anyone who wished to attend to share the whales on *Nalukataq*. Lollie Hopson of Barrow expressed her view to me: "In our tradition, any difficulty unites us, makes us stronger, and have us confirm what the most important thing is … our whales and our togetherness as the People of the Whales" (15 June, 2006). Many Iñupiat recognize and anticipate the link between global warming and their changing relationship to whales. A long conversation with George Ahmaogak, Sr. over several cups of coffee reminded me of this anticipated concern:

> Without whaling, our society will experience severe social disorder, nutritional problems …. We need whaling and the associated festivals to keep our connection with the whales. If [there is] no whale, [there will be] no festivals, and [the absence of whales and festivals] will cause a severe depression in this community. (20 September, 2005)

Having served as the mayor of the North Slope Borough and as a whaling captain since the late 1980s, Ahmaogak has seen many changes in the environment and his people's worldview. Ahmaogak expressed his awareness of subsistence difficulties and increasing social and cultural problems caused by changing environment:

> Human-whale spirituality will be changing. If our contact with the whale is kept influenced by global warming, our spirituality will soon start eroding. Now we must think, feel, and see like a whale to retain our relation. Feeling about the whale and oneness with the animal keep us [both humans and whales] alive, and this can be continued with the re-recognition of our traditional events like drum music. (20 September, 2005)

With the support of North Slope Borough elders and residents, Ahmaogak and his staff at the mayor's office resuscitated *Kiġviq* in 1988, at a time when Iñupiaq cultural identity, political issues, and environmental awareness were all coming together. "This festival was known to show respect to harvest, but it continued to lie dormant for generations, and the return of ancestral heirlooms assisted us in retrieving some of the ways of acknowledging the spirit of the whale." Ahmaogak claimed that the musical element of the festival binds the Iñupiat and the whales, and now is the time for his people to put more *iñua* (spirits) into their musical performance as a form of *cetaceousness,* as drum music is a way for the Iñupiat to feel the environment through the whale's senses.

Fannie Akpik also believes that it is time for the Iñupiat to make music to reconnect the human mind with the whale's because "Now our community needs to be stronger than ever" (10 July, 2005). Traditionally, the Iñupiat believe that without any whale harvest, they should refrain from conducting performances or festivities. Yet, according to Akpik music now has a capacity to help people adapt to the changing environment:

> If we need to change things to survive, then we ought to. If we have no whales, then we really do need to have more music. It would help us and our souls tune into the mind of the whales. We also say the whale is always looking for a village with good music. Drum music may become our last hope to keep our relationship with the whale. (10 July, 2005)

This strong verve is also shared by her dance group members who are whalers. As I spoke with my collaborators, I felt that there was a new understanding of the whale-music relationship among Iñupiaq performers: it is now the Iñupiat themselves who bring music to the whales to repair the broken whaling cycle. George Kingik elaborated:

> It was a taboo [to have drum dance at the time of insufficient whale harvest] because our people knew the whales would return in the following season if we remained humble and quiet. But we don't have such guarantee anymore. A taboo always ha[s] a reason or two to make our life safer …. This is a time of our cultural survival and, for us to survive, if you ask me, not having any music [when we have no whales] is a new taboo. I think we can play our drums more often to remind the whales that we're still here waiting for them. (George Kingik, 22 June, 2006)

The whaling cycle needs to turn, with or without the whales. Some Iñupiaq performers are now willing to reverse the metaphorical power relationship. Iñupiat can give music to the whales through their drumming for the whales. To complete the cycle, the whalers need the whales. To get the whales, they should perform and drum. "No more waiting," agreed Piquk Tuzzyloyluk, a whaler's wife in Point Hope (17 August, 2005). Ahmaogak further emphasized that "making changes [in our livelihood] is our adaptation, a means of survival." In fact, the drum dance has become increasingly common outside the traditional occasions and is performed to celebrate non-traditional events such as a new school term or a spring festival. These events were not traditionally part of the whaling cycle, but all festive occasions in the villages have links to whaling. In this way, the newly developed events are likely to become part of the whaling cycle as the Iñupiat adaptation progresses. All such occasions welcome visitors, Iñupiat and non-Iñupiat alike. While the role is reversed between the Iñupiat and the whales, drum music remains an

irreplaceable bond between Iñupiat and whales.

Although neither Barrow nor Point Hope was able to host the drum dance at *Nalukataq* in 2006, Barrow was privileged to host the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) in July of the same year, welcoming international delegations from the six Arctic nations. The Iñupiaq dancers organized four nights of drum dance and sharing of accumulated whales retrieved from their *sigluaq*s. Performance became a way to communicate with other pan-Arctic culture groups and a way to invite the guests to the Iñupiat land. Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* was reactivated and reconfirmed through the circumpolar gathering around the drumbeat.

"What do you think you have to do to cope with climate change?" After the convention, I asked this of a whaling captain whom I sat next to at the high school gymnasium at the drum dance. Offering me a piece of *muktuk*, he said:

> The key here is to be ready. Oh, we'll be ready early [so as] not to miss any whales that migrate early due to warming sea water, and we'll work faster, harder to survive with the whales. We're a strong people. If the environment needs to change, we'll adapt. If the whales need to change, we'll keep up. That's the way how our ancestors always had been. We will survive … see, we can still beat the drums for the whales! Drumming gives us confidence. Power. We have to transport our old custom into new times, and it will go through changes on our tradition and will make our best efforts to keep it going. We may need more time to adapt, but there are more people now [who] participate in dance and drumming for our whales. We are thinking of the whales more than ever. Our necessity and desire to be with the whales will always be here in our blood and land. We dance, sing, and drum for the whales. We are 7,000 [Iñupiaq population] strong here, over 7,000. (Anonymous, 17 August, 2005)

This chapter describes how Iñupiaq drumming and its continuity demonstrate an active adaptation process to deal with environmental changes and stresses. Drum performance and its resurgence in community events mark the growth of *cetaceousness*.

In order to survive, the Iñupiat newly endowed their performance with the strength to bring the whales back to them. In this way, the drumming that was originally brought to the Iñupiat by the bowhead whales is returned to the whales through collaborative reciprocity. Inevitably, the future holds further changes and challenges. Yet the Iñupiat drumming for the whales continues to be an active agent in this process. My collaborators' voices demonstrate how performance plays a significant role in expressing and reconfirming their *cetaceousness*—ties with the whales and with their land. The broad yet worsening future uncertainties gradually take shape as specific environmental degradations. Iñupiaq whalers now work on their own adaptation to survive such challenges via musicality to reconstruct their disrupted whaling cycle. To the Iñupiat, as Diana Oktollik stated, the drumbeat is the heartbeat of the People of the Whales, and the instrument now has power to reestablish the communication between the Iñupiat and the whales.

CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSIONS

Now the fall is here again. On October 5 and 6, 2007, as I revise this dissertation, the strong wind and high waves kept everyone home in Barrow, although fall whaling was supposed to have started two days before. Storms, big gusts of winds and waves recently started coming to Barrow more frequently in the fall. The situation reminded me of late September 2005, my second year in Alaska. An unexpected fall storm caught the people of Barrow unprepared. "We need your help. Can you meet us in front of the UIC Science Center?" Anne Jensen, senior scientist of the Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation, called me one morning for emergency assistance. Anne had been taking the lead of archaeological investigations at the ancient site of Nuvuk since 2001. Nuvuk is also known as Point Barrow, which is located approximately ten miles north of today's major Barrow settlement. The focus of the project was the recovery and analysis of the remains from a 1,000-year old cemetery that is now about to be washed away. The project involved NSB high school students and researchers from across the nation. Nuvuk, in this sense, became a symbol of collaborative efforts between the Iñupiat and archaeologists.

After the 2005 September storm, Anne and her archaeological crew were notified by a local hunter that human remains were being exposed to the sea water near Nuvuk. About fifty feet (fifteen meters) of the coast had washed out to the ocean, threatening the obliteration of Iñupiat heritage and cultural resources at the Point. We hurried to the site on a fortified van as we passed gravel and dark wet sod. Walking by a few enormous polar bear tracks that continued from the shore to the tundra, we found pieces of old human bones along with weathered seal vertebrae and scattered driftwood (Figure 7.1).



Figure 7.1—Emergency at Nuvuk, Point Barrow. (September 2005)

In the persistent wind, we counted all visible bones and skeletal remains, measured them, photographed and sketched them, labeled and bagged them, and put them away in green *mikiġaq* buckets and securely sealed the top. With my own eyes, I saw Iñupiat past and memories disappear into the sea. The experience filled me with feelings of vulnerability. It was also highly emotional.

The people of Barrow later decided to re-intern the human remains in a new ceremonial ground on the far side of village, pushing Barrow further inland. "Our world is changing," said Mary Ann IqiḷanWarden, Presbyterian minister who gave the prayers at the reburial ceremony, "but we see the changes that most people [in the world] still don't see—they may be too insulated from changes or they probably haven't experienced the seriousness of global warming as much as us around here." However, as Mary Ann continued, soon, the rest of the world will also be coping with these changes and experiencing social problems. "We have to present our concerns [to the world]," said

George Ahmaogak, Sr., that global warming and its significant influence upon human survival are "not as distant as the others [in the south] see it." In the Arctic, the future is now.

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

Through my ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation in the two Iñupiaq whaling communities, Barrow and Point Hope, Alaska, I explored how global warming has influenced *cetaceousness*—the integrity of Iñupiaq identity in relation to the bowhead whales, and the indigenous efforts to survive the world that is about to float away. In this dissertation, I focused on how the Iñupiaq whale hunt, a sense of place revealed in storytelling and musical performances collectively demonstrates the people's emotional engagement with their transforming world. In Iñupiaq country, climate change not only triggers direct threats to traditional whaling, but also endangers fundamental whale-centered cultural ceremonies, oral traditions, expressive culture, and, thus, the indigenous society itself. Among the Iñupiat, these changes are experienced throughout their annual whaling cycle.

At the beginning of my work, the Iñupiat adaptation to the changing world seemed treacherous to my outsider eyes. Yet this study demonstrates the Iñupiat have hope for the future. As a humanistic geographer, I considered environmental, social, and political factors and their imprints on human emotions to understand more fully what environmental change means to Iñupiaq life. The examples I presented show some of the complex pathways along which the Iñupiat construct adaptive strategies to retain their bond with the whales. Throughout my fieldwork and personal visits, I realized the Iñupiat

adaptability is manifest through social action generated out of culturally informed innovation. This in turn often produces results that may seem counter-intuitive or "inauthentic" to non-Iñupiat, such as the incorporation of modern technology and changes in traditional ways of hunting, storytelling, and ceremonials. However, the Iñupiat subsistence is built on change; furthermore, change and continuity are closely interrelated, and often coping with change facilitates human-environment interactions. I found that Iñupiaq cultural practices and hope for survival converge in their tradition of being flexible and responsive to their surroundings, and this is where their *cetaceousness* begins to take a new turn. *Cetaceousness* became an emotional filter that led to the active mobilization of renewed Iñupiat-whale relations. What characterizes Iñupiaq cultural values are their strength in innovation and their faith in adaptability; a few of my Iñupiaq collaborators emphasized that to keep whaling under the changing environment is a way to strengthen their cultural identity. The overarching goal of this study has been to elaborate this relationship, effects of environmental change and the aspirational strength of *cetaceousness*.

In order to clarify my standpoint, Chapter II presented the methodology for the dissertation: humanistic geography, emotional geography, phenomenology, and ethnographical fieldwork based on participant observation. The research plan allowed me to satisfy my interest in producing practical research that was accessible and useful to the Iñupiaq collaborators and communities I worked with. This chapter provided a description of my struggles to create and maintain a research design that would yield meaningful results from both non-indigenous and indigenous perspectives. I outlined the challenges and limitations of the research, and reflected on my fieldwork, my difficulties

with language interpretation, and my place as a non-Iñupiaq woman in the communities.

Chapter III documented Iñupiaq whaling politics and the emergence of indigenous organizations in the Arctic since the 1970s. For the Iñupiat, cultural survival demands the subsistence right to hunt whales. Currently, their cultural identity has been represented by political organizations that successfully defend this right. I used the phrase *muktuk* politics to capture the cultural importance of this entanglement and to link its significance to the notions of *cetaceousness* that I developed in the remainder of the study. My Iñupiaq collaborators often discussed the cultural importance of *muktuk* as a symbol of their indigenous identity and a metaphor for cultural survival. In this way, *muktuk* politics became crucial to my ethnography that sought to address the impacts of climate change on Iñupiaq *cetaceousness*.

Chapter IV described the Iñupiaq whale hunt and native observations of recent climate change experienced throughout the whaling cycle. Iñupiaq whalers are now obliged to adjust their whaling customs in order to accommodate environmental changes. I discussed how climate change inevitably forces native peoples to culturally adept, yet the productivity gap in Iñupiaq whaling in 2005 and 2006 reveals the vulnerability of Iñupiaq and the limitations of their ability to adapt fast enough to environmental change. The real challenge with assessing the impact of climate change, however, is in trying to understand the interconnectedness and the wide-ranging impacts that collectively work to shape the web of activities and life in the Arctic. With the examples in Chapters V and VI, I showed how Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* served as an adaptive strategy strengthened the foundation of Iñupiaq innovation.

Chapter V illustrated the spatial change in storytelling traditions in Point Hope

before and after the 1977 village relocation. I discussed how *Tikiġaqmiut* process environmental change through the storytelling tradition as a way to maintain their connection to a disappearing place. In this context, storytelling is an expressive form of adaptation that reflects environmental uncertainties and the long term well-being of the Iñupiat homeland. There is a particularly strong reciprocal link between a human sense of place and the presence of spirit-beings in their storytelling. For the Iñupiat, the content of stories and the very act of narrating them helps connect people to place, people to people, and ultimately people to whales. Stories serve to maintain a relationship and anchor the Iñupiat to their drowning home for old and young alike. I described how environmental change is culturally manifest through tales of the supernatural, particularly spirit-beings or ghosts by using Burch's (1971) account and my recent field notes as benchmarks to measure change. The types of stories and modes of telling them reveal *Tikiġaqmiut*'s uncertainty about the future based on their knowledge of the immediate past. As their environment becomes more unpredictable, the Iñupiat engage with new spirit-beings in their drowning home. I demonstrated how the settings of haunted landscapes have geographically reversed after the inhabitants moved from Old Town to New Town.

In Chapter VI, I analyzed global warming's reflection upon traditional Iñupiaq expressive culture, musical practices, performances and emotional transformations among performers. I illustrated some of the ways singing, dancing, and drumming provide the means by which Iñupiaq reconstruct the whaling cycle. In my interviews, I found that Iñupiaq music is both a means of adapting to environmental transformation and of indicating a transforming environment. In other words, music is not a miner's canary, but rather an agent of innovation and adaptation. Drum performances and their

recent resurgence in community events mark on a growth in *cetaceousness*. Specifically, the Iñupiat newly endowed their performance with an invitation for the whales to join their domain, previously performers centered a giving thanks. This is how the music that was originally brought to the Iñupiat by the bowhead whales is now being returned to the whales in an act of collaborative reciprocity.

Overall, my study exposed an Iñupiat cultural resilience that is founded upon and simultaneously fosters their *cetaceousness*. Once Eli Attungana, an elder of Point Hope, said:

> We are like flowers. And then like flowers we don't like to be hurt. And our land, we have to keep our land clean. And our animals are like having roads [to us] … we're like a flower. And then … we take care of them, as we do like our land, our ocean. And then here in Point Hope, that's how we should be, that we should have no way to hurt our land or water. Because the sea is where all the animals come. And that we have to take care of them. And we don't want it to spoil of anything. That's how we should treat our land and our people and our animals. (15 November, 2006)

The Iñupiat are flowers deeply rooted in their tundra, which was once a whale. Just as the flowers and the earth are inseparable, the whale—as a metaphor of the land—nourishes humans and enables them to survive. In order to survive, the Iñupiat have newly endowed their culture with the power to sustain their bond with the whales. Inevitably, the future holds further changes and challenges, but Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* continues to be an active agent in the process.

RECIPROCITY WITH THE COMMUNITIES

The aim of this research was not simply to generate a research product, but to integrate the aspirations and priorities of Barrow and Point Hope communities. Although Iñupiat-whale reciprocity has been threatened, this study documents indigenous efforts to raise the level of *cetaceousness* through shifts in and enhancement of cultural expressions. The Iñupiaq communities that feel compelled to act would be powerful guides to navigate the rest of the world. An understanding of Iñupiaq *cetaceousness* may lead to broad social change, a building of pressure upward from the village that would eventually force governments to react nationally and globally to reduce carbon emissions. Reinforcement of *cetaceousness* also means a process of social change as the late Pamiuq Elavgak once remarked to me: "Whatever change happens, we shouldn't be disconnected [from our environment]. We should always be in the circle of the whale" (12 September, 2005). Iñupiat cultural resilience exemplifies an adaptive mechanism which is crucial for human survival. This study on *cetaceousness* may also have potential for assisting communities in future decision-making with non-Arctic regions, particularly in terms of research and policy. Disseminating the present research results to community members and policy-making bodies in Alaska may direct their attentions to the needs of the communities and their use as a basis for discussion on a number of current issues generated by the impact of climate warming. As Ahmaogak's earlier remark suggests, the Iñupiat are on the front line of climate change, and their survival could inform all our survivals.

The interview texts, analyses, maps, and images produced by this research can help facilitate intercultural communications so that non-native members of society can

understand the Iñupiaq notions of collaborative reciprocity through *cetaceousness*. The results obtained through interviews and my participant observation can be used in school curricula for various Iñupiat Heritage course activities in the North Slope Borough School District and the IHLC to help younger generations benefit from the wisdom of their parents and grandparents and their relationships with whales.

My dissertation text, along with supplemental material such as recordings and photograph CDs, will be deposited in the community as a token of my appreciation for their collaboration. Upon completion of the dissertation in late 2007, a debriefing trip to Barrow and Point Hope is scheduled to share the work with students in schools, and to discuss further possibilities of collaborative research with the Iñupiaq collaborators. Upon the agreement of the Iñupiat, the results of my research will be shared with outside audiences through journal articles, conference presentations, and hopefully a book. Through publication, I hope to encourage outside audiences to reconsider the nature of human-animal relationships at this time of rapid environmental change.

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APPENDIX
GLOSSARY

ACRONYMS

AEWC—Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission

AFN—Alaska Federation of Natives

ASRC—Arctic Slope Regional Corporation

BASC—Barrow Arctic Science Consortium

BWCA—Barrow Whaling Captains Association

ICC—Inuit Circumpolar Conference

ICRW—International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling

IHLC—Iñupiat History, Language and Culture Division

IRB—Institutional Review Board

IWC—International Whaling Commission

NSB—North Slope Borough

UAA—*Utqiagvigmiut Agviqsiuqit Agnanich* (Whaling Captains' Wives Auxiliary)

IÑUPIAQ WORDS

Aaka—grandmother

Aapa—grandfather

Aarigaa—Good; It feels good

Agviq—bowhead whale

Aktuq—Eskimo ice cream with caribou fat and meat

Apaġauti—a feast to conclude spring whaling (only in Barrow)

Atchu—I don't know

Attugluk—snow dress

Iñupiaq—"a real person"; singular, possessive, adjective form of *Iñupiat* that refers to the indigenous people of people of Alaska's North Slope Borough and the Bering Strait region.

Iñupiat—plural and possessive of *Iñupiaq*

Inuqullit—the Little People

Kivġiq—Messenger's Feast held in Barrow

Mikiġaq—fermented whale meat and *muktuk* marinated in the whale's blood

Mukluk—boots made of caribou, wolf, or seal skins

Muktuk—Bowhead blubber or the underlying layer of fat below the skin

Nalukataq—midsummer whale feast; "blanket toss"

Qagmaqtuuq—One of the two remaining *Qalgis* in Point Hope

Qalgi—ceremonial whalebone house/space/public building for the people to get together for whaling preparation/clan house and space

Qiñu—born of ice ceremony (conducted in Point Hope only)

Sigluaq—an ice cellar

Silla—weather/spirit/surrounding environmental conditions/spirit that controls weather

Tiġara—Old Town of Point Hope

Tikigaq—Point Hope/ an index finger

Tikigaqmiut—People of Point Hope

Ukpeaġvik—Barrow/the place where we hunt the snowy owls

Ukpeaġvikmiut—People of Barrow

Ulu—a semi-circular women's knife

Umiak—a multiple-person wooden boat wrapped with bearded seal skins

Umialik—a successful whaling captain and his wife

Uŋasiksikaaq—One of the two remaining *Qalgis* in Point Hope