

*Tuktoyaktuk Hunters & Trappers Committee*



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**AND**



Environment and Natural Resources  
INUVIK REGION

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## **2007 BELUGA HARVEST PROGRAM REPORT**

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**July/August 2007**

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Beluga Harvesting // Hendrickson Island



Willie Carpenter steering, Brandon J. Voudrach Observing and Jonah Carpenter with Harpoon

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## Introduction

Fur trading was one of the earliest livelihood, a way for people in the North to gain a source of revenue. It has been voiced out loud by our past elders that they have an ongoing bank account and that their bank is in the out there on the land. The Government and its people knows that traditional activities such as trapping is a valuable commodity and they are working hard to ensure it remains a healthy and balanced market for its people in the North.

In 1998 the Department of Environment and Natural Resources called for a regional Hunters and Trappers Conference in Inuvik, Northwest Territories in order to bring back a fading corporate structure. The conference included trappers from Fort McPherson, Tsuigehtchic, Aklavik, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour and Ulukhaktok. One of several recommendations from this conference was to initiate a trapper-training program for the youth and even decentralize the program to the community level. Since the recommendation, several successful trapper training programs were conducted throughout the NWT.

The Tuktoyaktuk Hunters and Trappers Committee understand that a summer program of this nature does not, in actual fact, demonstrate a trapping training component. However, it does demonstrate a need for a module of this class to fully complete trappers training course. This program includes travel preparation, water travel, camping, fishing and hunting methods/techniques. The fishing component helps trappers to gather and store fish for the upcoming trapping season.

The purpose for this project is to present first hand traditional whale hunt, fishing and water travelling techniques to the young men that otherwise would not have an opportunity to harvest whales, fish and travel. Although the project represents the traditional aspects of harvesting we are also focused on encouraging the youth to continue their education and through this type of activities it may give the students direction in developing a career in a renewable resources field. Having an official from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources participate in the program gives the young people an incentive to continue education and thereby achieving a career in that field.



Officer VOUDRACH presenting GMVF Jacket to Jorgan ELIAS

## Method

Two instructors with two assistants were hired to conduct the whale harvest program. They each owned an 18' lund boat with all required gear and tools for the program. All four boats were used for the program and ENR assisted with the use of their boat for transportation purposes. For this program, it was decided to have three students per instructor so six youth were selected by the Tuktoyaktuk Hunters and Trappers Committee.

Each instructor has the traditional skill and experience in whaling, fishing and the ability to pass their skills to the youth. The means of transportation was by boat to Topkak (Dupkuk) for fishing and Hendrickson Island to harvest three whales. They used tents at Topkak for the seine fishing and Utilized Jonas LUCAS' cabin near East White Fish while waiting for the wind to lessen and whales to come into area. The instructors had four or more sets of harpoons and one rifle each for the whale harvest and for the seine fishing project, they had the use of a 3½" gill net.

The young men were taught to prepare a work counter for the whale preparation and storage and the fish harvest at Topkak. At Topkak they had the use of a previously constructed smokehouse with racks for smoking and drying fish. When at Topkak they kept active by daily maintaining a fishnet and making dried fish.



Here we have them setting a net. Jonah CARPENTER operating boat at the bow of boat David LUCAS waiting for signal to drop fishnet anchor and Beau RADDI ensuring fishnet is not tangle while net is being pulled out. Photo taken at TOPKAK.

## Results

### Hendrickson Island

Three whales were harvested. While the whales were being cut up the Tuktoyaktuk Hunters and Trappers Committee/FJMC Whale Monitor and Department of Fisheries and Oceans Whale Technician took measurements and collected samples from the whales.

Everyone (2 instructors, 2 assistants and 6 youth) began cutting the whale and placing the muktuk in five gallon containers at the work site at Topkak. The youth were taught how to cut up whale and taught reason why the whales had to sit on platforms overnight before working on the muktuk. They were also taught the importance of keeping work area and muktuk clean, ensuring muktuk doesn't become contaminated. The following day they prepared the muktuk, cutting it into 9"x9" squares and placing into 5 gallon plastic pails (10 pails were filled). The rest of the muktuk (one and one half) was distributed to elders in Tuktoyaktuk. The pails were transported to Tuk by ENR and distributed to 9 homes in the community.

The hunt involved pursuing the whale and harpooned with a line and buoy attached to the harpoon head. When harpooned the buoy was followed and when the whale surfaced it was shot with a rifle. After the whale was shot the hunters waited until there was no more movement from the buoy, then they towed the whale with a rope tied to the whale to shore at Hendrickson Island for skinning and de-boning meat.

### Topkak

On July 18, 2007 the Tuktoyaktuk HTC board selected two instructors, two assistants and six young persons for the 2007 beluga whale program. July 19, 2007 instructors and the rest of the crew began preparing their travel plan, getting their gear ready, buying fuel, buying food and other personal items. Plan was to leave the following Saturday July 21, 2007. The weather began changing thus postponing trip. The weather finally became tolerable and everyone left for Topkak on July 25, 2007. The original plan was to make camp at Hendrickson Island but winds didn't allow so Topkak was the next selected site to set up camp. While awaiting weather the group began fishing by setting 3½" mesh net for herring. Mixed fish were caught; white fish, herring, crooked back white fish, coney. They made hang fish (bouchiak) with the herring, fillet dry-fish with the white fish.

July 26, 2007 the group traveled to Hutchinson Bay to hunt whales and caribou. Winds picked up as they entered into Hutchinson Bay making difficult to hunt whales. The group stopped at Eddie DILLON's camp to wait for the wind to lessen. Winds didn't lessen so they had to lay over for the night. July 27, 2007 with the winds shifting more to the east the group tried leaving and headed for Topkak. Before arriving at Warren Point the group harvested one male caribou. With the wind shift more to the north and stronger the group had to wait until midnight before trying to travel back to Topkak. Left Warren Point at

00:30hrs. The waves were averaging approximately six feet but with no white caps. Arrived Topkak camp on July 28, 2007 at 02:00hrs. Everyone was exhausted, so it didn't take too long before everyone was fast asleep in their tents.

Cabins the group stayed in while awaiting winds to diminish:



Eddie DILLON's cabin at Siglialuk, NE Hutchinson Bay



Davie KENGNEKTAK's cabin at Siglialuk, NE Hutchinson Bay

**Figures**



Beluga Harvest Project at Topkak (Dupkuk)

**Camp at Dupkuk**



**David NASOGALUAK** preparing fish (herring) to hang in smokehouse



**July 25, 2007**  
Leaving Tuktoyaktuk for Topkak to set up camp



**Topkak (Dupkuk)**

At end you can see the previously constructed (2001) smokehouse



**Relaxing at Topkak**

Joe Roy KIMIKSANA, Carl KUPTANA, William STEEN



**Travelling to Hutchinson Bay**

Can see Warren Point in a distance



**Warren Point**  
July 26, 2007



**Roasting Caribou Ribs at Warren Point**  
July 27, 2007



**Warren Point looking at the Beaufort Sea**

July 27, 2007



**Trish VOUDRACH preparing dry fish**

Cassie VOUDRACH, David LUCAS, Jonah CARPENTER and Brandon VOUDRACH



**Willie Carpenter**  
Preparing Caribou dinner



**Preparing Muktuk**  
Extracting excess blubber



### **Morning Coffee**

David NASOGALUAK Sr., Joe Roy KIMIKSANA Sr., Willie CARPENTER



More Muktuk Preparation



**Inside of Smokehouse**  
Fire & Hang Fish (herring)

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Thanks go to David Nasogaluak Sr. and Willie CARPENTER, Instructors of the Beluga Harvest Technique project, Joe Roy KIMIKSANA Sr. and Jonas LUCAS, Assistants for their expertise and knowledge during the project. I should also thank the young participants (Carl Kuptana, Jonah Carpenter, Beau Raddi, William Steen, David Lucas, Joe Roy Kimiksana Jr., and Brandon Voudrach), for making this project such an enjoyable success. Thanks to Eddie DILLON for the use of cabin at Siglialuk. Thanks go to the Dept. of ENR for coordinating this project and to the Tuktoyaktuk Hunters and Trappers Committee Chair and Directors for their approval of funds provided for this project. Last but not least, thanks to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment for providing the funds for this program.

## **Expenditures**

Attached to this report are copies of receipts that represent the expenses for the program.