

Whale Camp Interviews

Q What does it mean with flags up?

A Eating muktuk? yes - Cookit? no

- Last night everyone went to sleep, let muktuk burn

Sound of sharpening blade - Can use 15 or 20 minutes before it gets dull. Whose whale? When brought in

Whale cutting - 6 hours cutting so far - 2 hours left

Cutting body now (loud snow machine noises)

How long here? Come out 3 hrs ago, helping

Divide into shares now - about 100 people to share

John Nusunginya

Whales go to Canada in summertime - follows daylight all the time - to Canada, then south when days shorten

Whale swims flat on back underwater - turns upright when close to surface - looks up at sky when swimming

Spooky in springtime - fluorescent buoys must be covered
Whales can hear and see well underwater - Must be quiet

Whales sometimes want to be cut by a crew - don't pay attention to noise

Sometimes a crew just can't get a whale, ever - Unlucky -

Must share meat - give to poor - to get more catch

Cutting whale - Tail part & intestines and organs go to crew

That cut whale; Flipper (fluke) goes to man who actually killed whale (out of custom for a while)

27 boats out, each doesn't get much - Front part of

Whale goes to all whalers (People ~~who~~ would lose interest in whaling if all not shared)

Captain must support all crew for a month and a half
(quite expensive)

But great thrill to catch whale, beyond words

Can't do it alone, need people to pull whale, and have to share catch

Expenses? Gas, tent heat 24 hrs a day & snow machines; cigarettes & goodies for men

Early times - stove only used for cooking, cold tent

Today people want everything there or they'll go to other captains who'll furnish them

Bombs? Price about doubled over years ago

Habits of whales - Spring - wait on edge of ice for whale coming from south

Fall - out a mile or two into open water

Better chance of getting whale

Dr. Floyd Durham

Bowhead whale - since Biblical times - first taken & exterminated in Greenland, then taken in Arctic Sea, etc

Eskimos on coast basically depended on whales

Big harvest - only one or two whales - lot of meat

Created closely knit communities without written language - oral tradition strong

Special whale - almost subhuman - bridge between mortal - immortal; Grateful to survive in rigorous climate

One of baleen whales, lack teeth, due to baleen plates
 largest animal can survive on tiniest organisms of
 sea - pinhead size to couple of inches long
 Mouth big enough to take in Umiak & crew of 6
 but not down throat

Catch free from parasites - other sea creatures
 full of whale lice, very revolting appearance
 Butchered bowhead whales have none, healthy critter
 Grey whales covered with lice, Ugruk full of
 stomach parasites - boil out when butchered
 Disgusting

Whale muktuk clean, good eating - Liver is a
 problem in whales, not so good

Parts of whale - bowed jaw bones made into sled
 runner by slicing off a piece of ivory-like material
 to make wooden runners last indefinitely longer

baleen - used since 90s when all women
 wore hoop skirts and other armor to be attractive
 Baleen from one whale would pay for one whole
 expedition - \$4-5 a pound; plastics & alloys took over
 Eskimos use for flexible baskets, stomach barbs
 for ~~for~~ killing wolves, toys, etc to use all parts of
 whale - By usage ~~of~~ this way whales & Eskimos will
 survive & conservationists be satisfied

Habits - do one thing at a time - migrate, feed, or calve
 Bowheads do all three at once - Go through Bering
 Sea after wintering, half females already to calve, other

half impregnated during migration

Eskimos often see tiny babies along

Whales also feed as hold-ups occur when held up by ice jams Plankton feeding and perhaps bottom feeding like Gray whales

These whales versatile, unlike other kinds whales, necessary to survival in north

Embryos from impregnated whales proved to Eskimos birth was biological instead of miraculous

Can survive under almost any ice, feeding conditions

Man is greatest enemy - can destroy animals in spite of their great survival abilities

"Our privilege & ^{our} opportunity to kill those that we need and to butcher those that we kill and not to waste anything"

How many go by ^{pt.} Barrow - how act? Act like kids in a swimming pool - have so much fun - See more this decade - leaping and cavorting - like slow motion pictures, exposing half body, fall over with great splash Last two years seem to be in greater numbers

13 in last spring at Point Hope (as many as four years' catch before) ^{whale} Population coming back

along with greater population of natives - can continue as perpetual part of Eskimo living on coast of Alaska - spirit of cooperation will make things go better & better