

## Introduction: Community-Based Whaling in the North

The papers in this volume were presented during the 1991 annual meeting of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The topic of the two-day symposium was Sustainable Whaling in Contemporary Context, and though not all papers presented at the symposium are published in this issue of *Arctic*, the ones appearing provide a representative cross-section of research on whaling being carried out in different disciplines at this time.

Most whaling societies today are found in the circumpolar region, a reflection of the importance that marine resources continue to play in regions where agricultural food production is severely constrained by topography and climate. Whaling in these regions is generally recognized as providing an important socio-cultural and economic foundation for many arctic aboriginal peoples' societies, culture and identity, yet as papers by Hoel, Kalland and Ris make clear, whaling also continues to be important for non-aboriginal societies in the northern regions today as in the past.

The hunting of certain whale species is regulated by the International Whaling Commission (IWC), and insofar as some of these designated species are hunted by aboriginal people in the coastal waters of various communities, the IWC plays a management role in some domestic coastal whale fisheries. Gambell describes the history of that involvement, as well as providing some indication of present problems and possible future initiatives to be taken by the IWC.

The composition of the IWC has changed over the past twenty years, as the papers by Andresen, Gambell and Hoel make clear, and now the majority of member countries have no significant economic interests in whaling and support the goals of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that lobby to extend the temporary pause in commercial whaling agreed upon by the IWC in 1985.

These NGO anti-whaling campaigns have resulted in polarized debate and disharmony at the IWC and severe disruptions in the lives of members of whaling societies almost everywhere. The effect of these recent deep divisions upon the effectiveness of the IWC as an international resource management body is assessed in papers by Andresen and Hoel, and some indication of the problems caused to people at the community level appears in the papers by Caulfield, Gambell, Kalland and Ris.

Nevertheless, some whaling societies remain largely unaffected by the debates at the IWC, including some of those societies hunting the small cetaceans that are not subject to IWC jurisdiction. Nevertheless, as small cetaceans are migratory species not under international regulation, recent initiatives have been taken outside of the IWC by the parties most concerned about the conservation and rational management of these valued resources.

Hoel's paper outlines initiatives by North Atlantic whaling societies to rationalize the management of these particular species within the context of the total marine ecosystem and their own nations' fisheries policies.

To effectively deal with the management of their small cetacean resources, the whalers in Inupiat and Inuvialuit communities of Alaska and Canada have created a joint beluga management body to harmonize the separate management plans governing beluga conservation in their respective regions of the Arctic. The paper by Adams *et al.* describes one of these community-based initiatives and indicates that in this case it may be necessary to expand this international initiative to include the Russian Yuit whalers in this particular management regime.

Similarly, in the Eastern Arctic, a Canada-Greenland binational body has assumed responsibility for managing the stocks of beluga and narwhal harvested by whalers in these two countries. This joint commission is alluded to in the paper by Richard and Pike, who focus their study upon a whale co-management body established to deal with a beluga management problem in one part of the region covered by the Canada-Greenland commission.

The problem examined by Richard and Pike is by no means unusual in fisheries and wildlife management and relates to different interpretations of dissimilar knowledge bases possessed by the resource users and resource managers. The evolving understanding of how best to manage resources for sustainable community-based use now supports an increased role for resource users in management, thereby reducing the distance and dissonance between the two relevant parties. The case study by Richard and Pike provides an indication of the challenges as well as the promise of following this course of action.

Across Davis Strait, in Greenland, whalers continue to be subject to two contrasting management situations. On the one hand beluga and narwhal management is increasingly overseen by the Canada-Greenland binational commission, in which the Greenlanders' own management goals and those of the Canadian hunters and the state-managers and biologists in both countries will be fundamentally in agreement. Despite this fundamental accord however, differences likely exist, resulting from differing knowledge bases, approaches and interpretations. However, these differences will not likely compromise the development and implementation of a rational management plan, because working closely together to reach a common goal encourages mutual accommodation and increased understanding and respect among parties, notwithstanding the different expertise and perspectives they bring to the discussions.

In terms of the community impacts of management regimes, the Greenland whalers who hunt the minke, fin (and until recently the humpback) whales appear to be less fortunate than those hunting the smaller beluga and narwhal. The hunting of the larger whale species is regulated in part by the IWC, and at the present time, as Hoel's paper makes clear, IWC ideological goals and political actions appear to generate conflict and discourage the mutual accommodation, understanding and respect that are basic to achieving sound management outcomes.

In contrast to modern views of resource management, the IWC appears outdated: top-down in an age of bottom-up approaches, and failing to recognize that the community-based resource users as a general rule necessarily have in place the demonstrated social and cultural institutions to continue managing sustainably and equitably the diverse resources of the niche they have long occupied and understand so well. For people who value their distinctive lifestyle, who feel pride in their culture and secure in their local environment, their primary goal in harvesting local resources is to sustain their interdependent social, cultural and economic activities and institutions from generation to generation. Moreover, as Hoel, Kalland and Ris point out in their papers, it is the community-based harvesters who are most aware and vigilant in taking action against the far more damaging spectre of marine habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity, and therefore with whom resource managers and environmentalists should seek to create meaningful alliances.

To better understand the ideological position taken by a majority of governments at the IWC, Kalland explores the activities of the various whale-protection organizations that effectively use the IWC to advance a variety of animal-protection and "environmental" goals. The problem for community-based whalers today is that they are *whalers*, and as such they threaten harm to an animal type that has become transformed into a powerful symbol. As Kalland points out, it is less any actual, biological cetacean that has become transformed, but rather an imaginary, mythic "super whale."

The super whale is a very special symbol for some groups of people for whom it has become a totem. As both Kalland and Ris point out, one does not eat one's totem, and furthermore, totems are the means by which human populations are divided into opposed groups. These groups include the one to which an individual belongs and feels amity toward and other groups from which one is excluded and feels no kinship with or affection toward. Whalers (and those associated with whaling) belong to an excluded group and as such are easy to vilify; in such a climate of enmity it is predictable that a body such as the IWC, which appears to actively foster division at the present time, will have only limited ability to accomplish equitable international goals.

There is another problem for whalers that occurs because the public at large makes little distinction between the virtually unchecked exploitation that characterized most industrial-scale whaling in earlier times and the community-based whaling addressed by the authors of the following papers. The historic circumstances favouring uncontrolled large-scale industrial whaling no longer exist today, due to the ready availability of cheaper substitutes and various barriers restricting international trade in whale products. In contrast to the earlier global market demand for cheap edible oils that supported the whaling industry, today we see only localized and limited demand for meat and other edible products in those few societies that cherish their customary whale-based food culture.

The question remains, however: can whales be harvested sustainably, especially as whaling necessarily involves economic inputs and all societies in the modern world benefit from selling at least part of their surplus production, as Caulfield's paper makes abundantly clear in the case of aboriginal whaling in West Greenland.

The paper by Conrad and Bjørndal is noteworthy as being one of the very few bioeconomic analyses of a recent whale fishery and the only one that subjects a community-based commercial fishery to this level of formal scrutiny. This study independently concludes what the IWC Scientific Committee has recently been advising, namely, that conditions now exist for establishing sustainable harvest levels for several stocks of whales. Such harvests will not only contribute to social and economic security for maritime communities in the North, but also, with virtually complete assurance, ensure that the harvested stocks will continue to increase. In this regard, Hoel's paper provides evidence of the determination of some current and former members of the IWC to transcend the limitations of that particular international body and to engage in marine resource conservation practices in accord with contemporary science-based principles.

The interest in whaling research has been increasing in recent years, partly the result of whaling nations being required to carefully document the needs of the whale-product producers and consumers in response to IWC management requirements. However, much of this information remains in the "gray literature." It is hoped that this collection of papers will encourage other researchers to submit their reports for publication in the formal scientific literature.

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