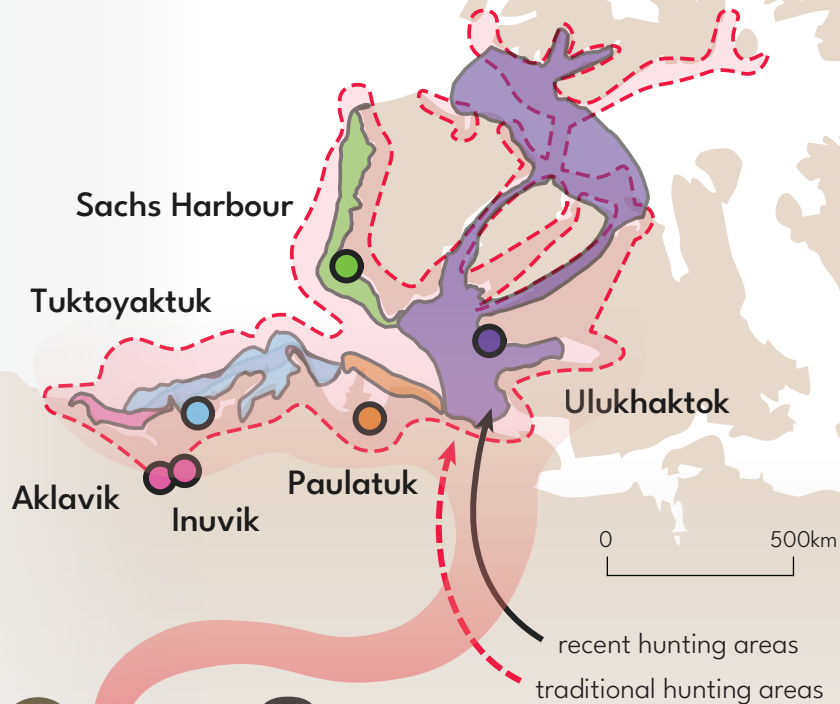


What We Know: Documenting Inuvialuit knowledge to inform polar bear management

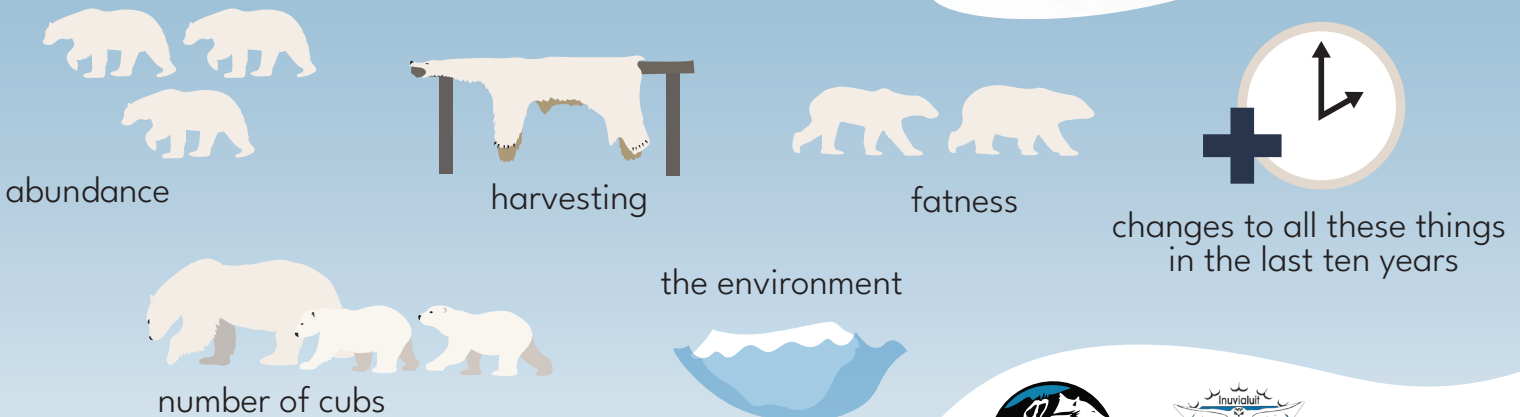
In 2019, the Inuvialuit and Iñupiat Polar Bear Joint Commission recommended the development of methods to bring Inuvialuit and Iñupiat knowledge together with western science to estimate polar bear abundance.

Co-management partners have responded to this request. Part of this work involves documenting recent Inuvialuit and Iñupiat knowledge of polar bears and the ecosystem.

In 2022, a workshop was held in Inuvik. Representatives from each **Hunters and Trappers Committee** attended the workshop and shared their community's knowledge about polar bears and what changes have been observed over the past ten years.



Participants were asked about:



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY COUNCIL (NWT)



Game Council



Wildlife
Management
Advisory Council
North Slope

What we heard during the workshop

Hunters and Trappers Committee representatives discussed observations from the past ten years. Environmental change is being felt in new and complex ways, and affects the relationship between Inuvialuit and nanuq. Inuvialuit polar bear harvest remains culturally important, providing meat and teaching youth important traditions.

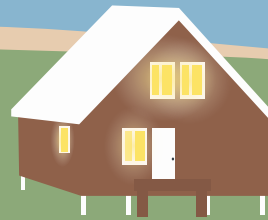
Polar bear management occurs from the community level up. Inuvialuit monitor polar bears by observing changes in numbers of cubs, tracks, bear sightings, and sea ice conditions over time. Quotas recommended by the co-management boards keep harvest levels sustainable.

Representatives discussed barriers to hunting in recent years, including more unpredictable weather, thinning and disappearing sea ice, and later ice formation. Bear fur quality has also declined in recent years.



While sightings of sick or dead bears remain rare, community representatives reported fewer older bears seen near shore. Some communities reported seeing more cubs in recent years, and some fewer.

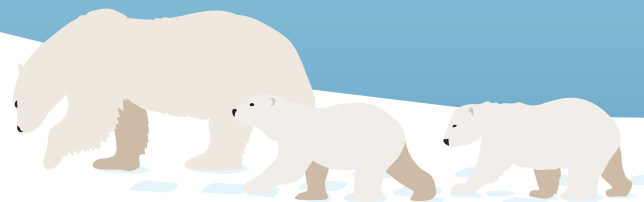
Bear movements are linked to weather, ice conditions, and prey availability.



Community representatives noted that polar bears continue to eat a variety of prey across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Some bears appear to be adapting to environmental changes by scavenging or hunting seals on land.

Changes in polar bear body condition over time varied by community. Overall, most communities are still seeing mainly average and fat bears.

Community representatives discussed monitoring methods. Scientific tools like DNA analysis, contaminants tracking, and body condition monitoring complement local knowledge and support community-led polar bear management. Communities expressed ongoing concern about invasive research methods and their impacts on bears, and a strong preference for non-invasive approaches.



Co-management partners will consider the knowledge shared in the October 2022 workshop, along with other lines of evidence, to inform and support how we manage polar bears in the Beaufort Sea.

