



Traditional Knowledge

Synthesis of traditional knowledge and science was completed through a conceptual knowledge model developed during this research. Traditional knowledge and scientific results were used separately and integrated together in various ways. There were times when scientific results either disagreed or confirmed traditional knowledge. Likewise, there were instances when traditional knowledge assisted in the scientific process, and when the scientific results clarified the traditional knowledge.

Integration of the two knowledge frames was dependent on both the interpretation screen and integration tubes; both may be variable, depending on the researcher or person evaluating the observations and results. By using both mind frames in this investigation, a more complete picture of tusk function was revealed.

Integrating traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge has enabled a more complete understanding of the narwhal, and has guided many studies in natural science that are centered around discovering the purpose and function of the erupted male narwhal tusk. Though traditional knowledge is accepted as a methodology to assist scientific investigation, the breadth and depth of this knowledge and the Inuit experience with the narwhal has not been fully realized and recorded, as is evident in the studies of other arctic species (Broadbent, 1996).



Our research allows insights from dental anthropology to shed light on the narwhal, as teeth reveal information about evolution, diet, behavior and function. Preliminary findings uncovered in this work have led to insights that will help formulate scientific inquiry, corroborate recorded data, and challenge prior perceptions.

- How often have you seen or heard about a male without a tusk?

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Qanoq akulikitsigisumik angutivissamik tuugaaqanngitsumik takusarpit imaluunnit tusartarpit?

“I hunted narwhal – just as they do now. But I will tell you that our days were different from today. When I was young the practice was the same but different hunting equipment and techniques, we didn’t use outboard motors like they do today. The narwhal would arrive earlier than they do now, when I was younger, things are different now. There is so much noise that disturbs the narwhal, people at the floe edge, disturbing the natural process – hunters waiting for them at the floe edge, it is noisy for them since it has been years since Inuit started using engines to hunt. Back then the narwhal could arrive to this area before ice break up. Narwhal would come even when the ice was thick that we



appears from the water and floats, it has fallen asleep and just floats. It is not often that narwhals behave like that when they are being hunted, floating in the water, without worrying about the ones hunting it. When the narwhal behaves like that, we can come to it with our boat but not in a kayak, and harpoon the unwounded narwhal and catch it.”

Quote from an interview with Jens Jeremiassen of Uummannaq, Greenland. Drawing of hunter by James Houston.



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