

### **Opening Statement of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission**

The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) is the co-management group authorized under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act to jointly manage the harvest of the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock of bowhead whales. We, the Inupiat and Siberian Yupik peoples of coastal northern and western Alaska have relied upon bowhead whales to feed our communities and nurture our spirits for thousands of years. Because we rely upon whaling as a cultural, spiritual, and nutritional resource, we actively support scientific studies necessary to ensure that our harvest is sustainable. We work closely with the North Slope Borough, a municipal government in northern Alaska, to monitor the harvest, population abundance, stock structure and health of bowhead whales. This information is provided openly as reports to our federal government and the IWC Scientific Committee (IWC SC) and the Aboriginal Whaling Sub-committee (ASW). As the IWC increasingly considers non-whaling issues, such as entanglements, ship strikes, climate change, whale watching, and other challenges to whales, we ask that the importance of subsistence whaling for our culture, and the cultures of other aboriginal whaling peoples, be acknowledged and protected in perpetuity at the IWC. Regulation of aboriginal subsistence whaling is a core responsibility of the IWC. We ask that the Commission continue to recognize that regulations governing aboriginal subsistence whaling have the potential to significantly impact traditional cultures, and therefore great care must be taken in discharging these responsibilities. Proposals to reduce funding for the IWC SC are concerning to us because renewing our harvest quota is dependent upon the activities of the SC, which reviews data we provide to assess if the harvest is sustainable. As such, AEWC would like to see the SC fully funded. If budget cuts are unavoidable, we request that IWC ensures that they do not hinder the ability of the SC or ASW to meet the timelines necessary to allow our harvest quotas and other aboriginal harvest quotas to be renewed. The preservation of aboriginal cultures and their ability to meet the nutritional and cultural needs of our people relies upon effective operation of the SC, ASW, and indeed the Commission itself. Thank you.

John Hopson, Jr.  
Chair, Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission