

The Sharing Project

Summary Report for Kaktovik Households

June 2014



"Sharing... It teaches my kids to be more respectful to people and elders. Care more about people. It plays a big role. It makes up who we are. We are about each other."

"...The word Aviktuaqatgiigñiq came from way back before anything was in writing. It's always been a way of life — how we were taught from our elders, generation to generation."

"...Sharing makes me feel like an Iñupiaq".

— Quotes by Kaktovik residents

Introduction

In April of 2010, a team of researchers from the UAF Sharing Project came to Kaktovik and interviewed the heads of households about their subsistence harvesting, sharing, and cooperative relationships, and how people make a living combining subsistence, jobs, and other sources of cash. This document is a summary report of important results of this research for Kaktovik. The Sharing Project also worked in Wainwright and Venetie. A more detailed technical report on all project findings will be published later in 2014 for all three communities.

Background on the project

There is a long history of documenting subsistence harvest on the North Slope, but the social relationships around subsistence – the ways in which people distribute their harvest to others, cooperate in harvesting, share, and give out shares among households – has not been well documented. "Subsistence" in this context is a small word that represents something much bigger — a very rich way of life followed by people in villages of Alaska. Climate change, proposed oil and gas development, and economic changes may affect household livelihoods in the future, and this creates an immediate need for good information. The goal of the Sharing Project was to document both harvest and the sharing and cooperation that are part of Kaktovik's mixed subsistence-cash economy.

Research for the Sharing Project was carried out by the University of Alaska Fairbanks, in collaboration with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Arizona State University, the Native Council of Kaktovik, and Traditional Councils of Wainwright and Venetie. Researchers worked with Local Advisory Committees in each village to design and complete the study. Funding for the project came from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), formerly Mineral Management Service (MMS).

How did we do this research?

In April of 2010 your household may have been interviewed by members of the Sharing Project research team. The interview asked detailed questions about household economies, including jobs. However, the main part of the survey asked how much subsistence food and other things like equipment, cash, gas, and labor came into your household based on social relationships like shares from cooperative hunting, shares your household received because you helped others get out hunting or fishing, food gifted to your household, and trading or purchase. Interviewers asked detailed questions about the following 7 species hunted and fished around Kaktovik:

- Bowhead
- Beluga
- Bearded Seal
- Dall Sheep
- Caribou
- Arctic Char
- Geese

We also asked other questions about household food security and perceptions of changes in sharing practices. At the end of 10 days of interviewing, we had interviewed 82% of all Kaktovik households (70 households in total). Interview questions focused on activities during the period between April 2009 to March 2010.

Key Findings from Study:

The 7 key findings presented below are only part of all the results from the Sharing Project. A more complete account of project findings will appear in the project's forthcoming technical report.

Finding 1: Most Kaktovik households participated in some aspect of subsistence.

Overall, Kaktovik households hunted 60 different species and used 57 different species (for eating, sewing, carving, trading, or giving away).

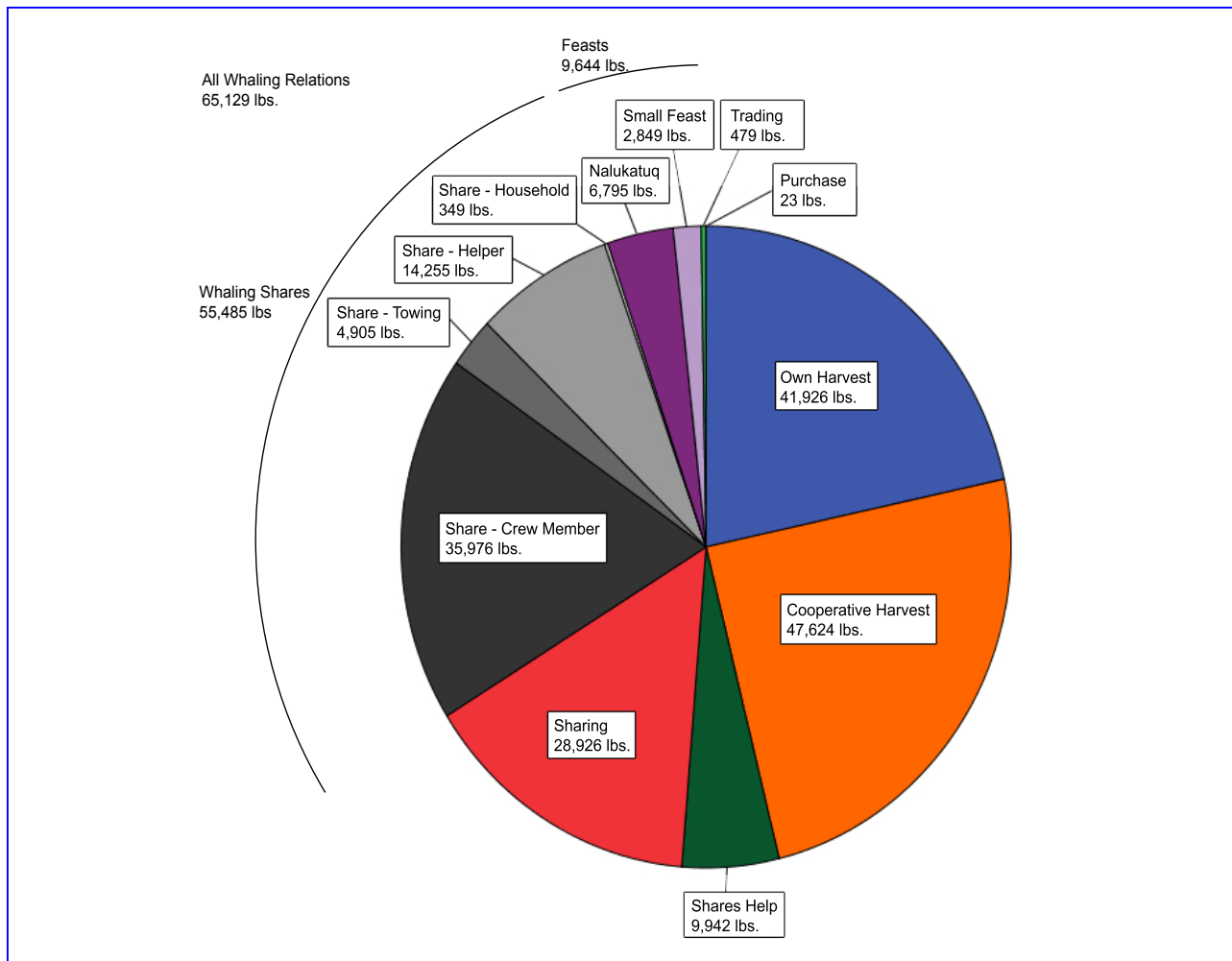
- For all these species, 84.3% of Kaktovik households gave subsistence food to other households and 100% received food from others.
- Average per capita (per person) harvest across all species in Kaktovik was 707 lbs.

For the 7 core species:

- 92% of households either hunted or fished for Bearded seal, caribou, Dall sheep, Arctic Char, or geese - or took part in whaling (as crew members, as contributors to crews or attended feasts).
- 79% of households (55 of 70 interviewed) engaged in hunting or fishing for Bearded seal, caribou, Dall sheep, Arctic Char, or geese. Of these 55 actively hunting households, 46 received food through sharing, shares or trade AND either helped process food or contributed to other people going out to hunt through providing money for gas or lending equipment, etc.
- Only 5 households in Kaktovik did not hunt, fish, or take part in some aspect of whaling.
- **In total, 95.7% of Kaktovik households (67 of 70) received food from sharing.**
- **The average amount a Kaktovik household received through sharing over the one-year period was about 208 pounds.**

Finding 2: Over 3/4 of the total food flowing into Kaktovik households was based on social relationships among households.

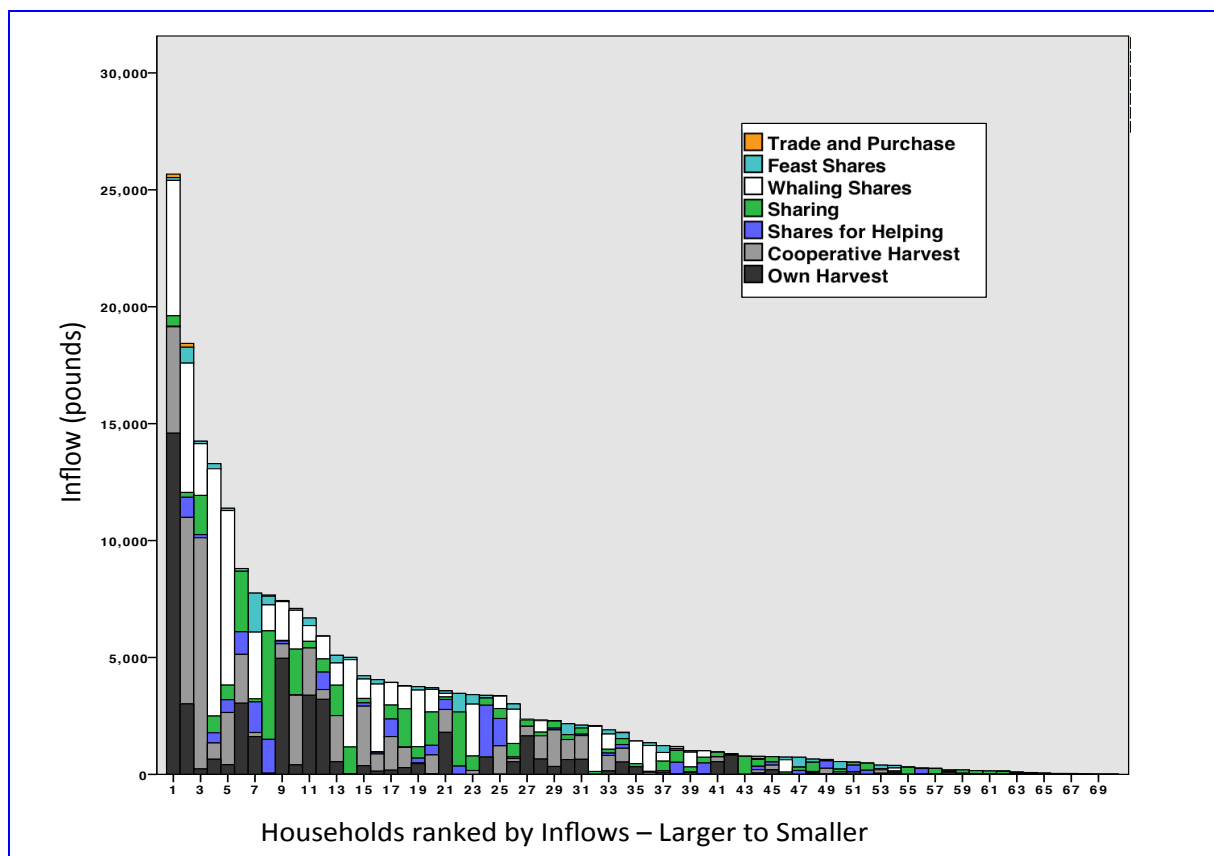
- Over 194,049 total pounds of subsistence food flowed into 70 interviewed Kaktovik households during the one-year period from the 7 core species.
- 79% of the subsistence food flowing into households was based on social relationships between households.
- About 22% of the total (41,926 lbs) flowed into households from households hunting, fishing, or gathering alone (blue slice in figure below).
- Orange represents shares to households from cooperative hunting with other households (about 25% of total or 47,624 lbs),
- Dark green is the flows of shares of meat or fish to households who didn't go hunting (5% or 9,942 lbs) but helped others get out hunting with contributions of gas, cash, or equipment, etc.
- The red slice shows the 28,926 lbs (15% of total) that came into households from sharing (gifting).
- All the gray slices combined (55,485 lbs or 29% of total) highlight food that flowed to households from Bowhead and Beluga whaling relationships (including captains' feasts and *Nalukataq*, towing shares, crew shares, and household shares).
- Only 503 lbs (less than 1%) flowed into all households from trading (green) and purchases (yellow).



Finding 3: There was a wide range of amounts of food flowing into individual Kaktovik households.

Households differed in how much subsistence food came into households. This figure shows how ALL subsistence food (in pounds) flowed into individual Kaktovik households based on different kinds of relationships.

- Some households had high inflows (households on the left - tall bars). Others had less (households on the right - shorter bars). Each column in the figure below represents a household.
- Households on the left side brought in a lot of food based on their own hunting or hunting with other households (black and grey colors). Households on the right side of the figure hunted less and some not at all. Still, subsistence food came into these households, mainly from sharing (green color), feasts (light blue color), whaling shares (white color), and shares of meat and fish received for helping others get out hunting (dark blue).
- **Sharing, shares and feasts were very important for those households not hunting actively.**
- 30% of households hunted or fished for 81% of all the food that was successfully hunted in the village.
- This general pattern is very similar to other villages in Alaska. Much of what these very productive households bring in is then redistributed to other households.



This figure shows all the inflows of food into each Kaktovik household. Each vertical bar in this figure is a household. The colors inside each bar show the kinds of relationships that account for how each household brings in their subsistence food. The height of each bar shows the total number of pounds flowing into households. The figure shows that food comes into households from many kinds of relationships. Special Note: The light blue color represents feasting shares (captain's small feast and *Nalukataq*), while the white color shows shares to households from crew and towing shares (Bowhead).

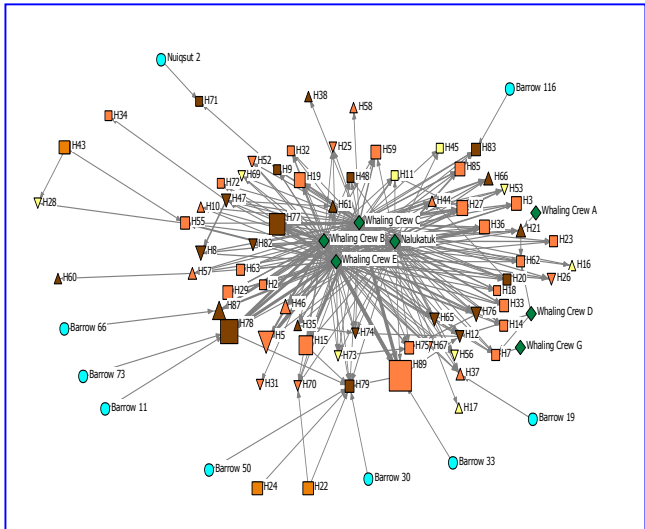
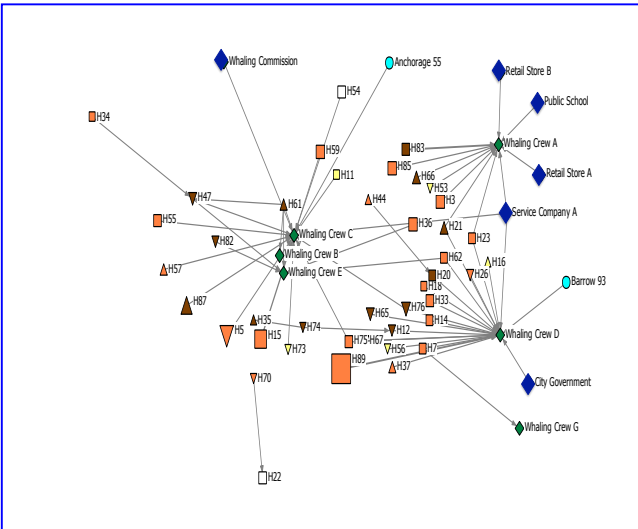
Finding 4: Whaling was a community-level effort that distributed food widely to Kaktovik households.

This finding of the study is not a surprise — North Slope communities have made this point for years. Results from the Sharing Project emphasize how important these sharing and distribution patterns are.

- Kaktovik Bowhead whaling crews landed three whales in the fall of 2009.
- 59 households, captains, crew members and organizations contributed in some way to the efforts of the 7 active whaling crews, by giving money, gas, equipment, food, labor, or cooking (biscuits!) to the crews. The figure below on the left shows the Fall 2009 whaling contribution network. Note: We interviewed only 3 active whaling captains, so this network is not complete.
- The distribution of *Nalukataq* shares from the 2008 whaling effort are shown in the figure on the right. Successful crews (green diamonds) distributed whale to the community through captains' feasts and *Nalukataq*.
- As well, all active captains from fall 2009 bowhead hunting distributed towing and crew shares to crew members. There were 57 crew members from 33 different Kaktovik households who received crew shares.
- Households who contributed to the crews received shares of Bowhead, as did households who attended captains' feasts and *Nalukataq*. Households also shared whale with each other as well.
- **On average each Kaktovik household received 255 pounds of Bowhead in 2009.**
- As well, Kaktovik households received 18,825 lbs of Beluga in total. 54 households (77%) received shares of Beluga. Eighteen households contributed hunters, cutting labor or boats to Beluga hunting. The average amount of Beluga that the 54 households received was 308 pounds.

Left Figure: Contributions to whaling crews

Right Figure: Distribution of whale to households



Figures: Green symbols represent different whaling crews, dark blue are other organizations, orange/brown/yellow symbols are Kaktovik households and light blue are households from other villages. Left Figure: Kaktovik households, households from other villages (2) and organizations (6) contributed to the efforts of the whaling crews (arrows are going into crews). Right Figure: successful whaling crews distributed whale in many different ways (arrows go from crews to other crews and households). Kaktovik households also received whale through sharing from households in other villages (shown as blue circles).

Finding 5: Households in Kaktovik are part of a mixed economy, and having a source of income seems very important for subsistence activities.

- Over 78% of households (50 of 64 non-teacher households) made a living combining harvesting with employment and some other source(s) of income (see Table 1 below).

Table: Combinations of household activities

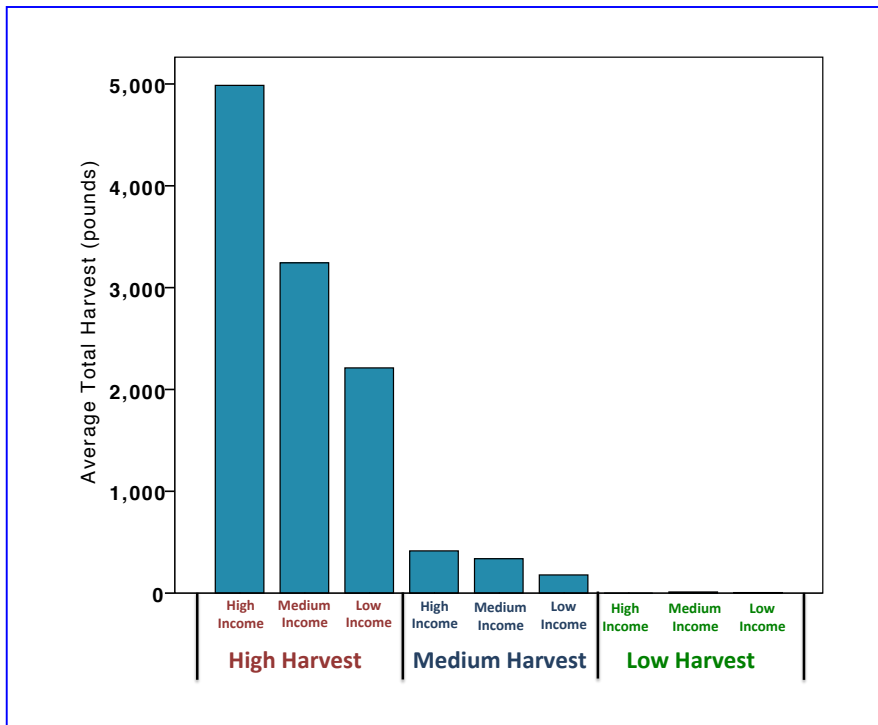
Kaktovik households in the mixed economy (2008 - 2009)	Different Household Activity Combinations					
	JOBS ONLY	Dividends/ Assistance ONLY	JOBS/ Dividends/ Assistance	Harvest/ Retirement/ Dividends/ Assistance (NO JOBS)	Harvest/ JOBS/ Retirement/ Dividends/ Assistance	Total
% (No. of Households)	1.6% (1)	1.6% (1)	4.7% (3)	12.5% (8)	78.1% (50)	100.0% (64)

Note: This table does not include non-local teacher households (6). It shows 64 of 70 total households.

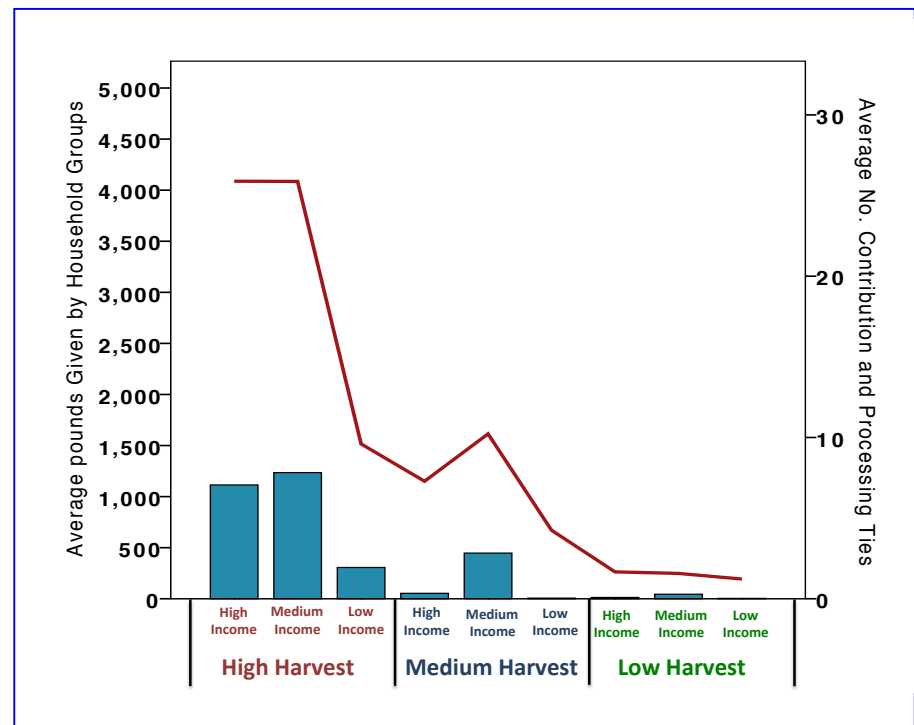
So how were cash and subsistence activities combined in Kaktovik?

- Average household wage income in Kaktovik was \$51,789.77. Average household income was \$82,845.
- Looking only at the top 1/3 of harvesting households in Kaktovik (21 of 64), all but 2 households had people who were employed. Even the remaining 2 high harvesting households with no employment had income coming in from combinations of retirement, dividends, or social assistance.
- 57% of high harvesting households (12 of 21) also had annual incomes ranked in the top third of all village incomes. However, 5 high harvesting households had medium incomes, and there were two high harvesting households whose incomes were in the lower 1/3 of all Kaktovik household incomes (see Left Figure on the next page).
- Of the 21 households in the lower third of all incomes, 11 were also in the lower third of harvesting households.
- About half of high harvesting households (10 of 21) also had annual incomes ranked in the top third of all village incomes. **In addition to having high incomes, households that were larger, with older heads of household, with active hunters and a lot of hunting equipment (that costs money!) were more likely to be bigger harvesters.** However, 8 high harvesting households had medium incomes and 5 high harvesting households had low incomes (see left figure below). **So, having access to cash is important for subsistence, but it is not the only factor contributing to high harvests.**
- High harvesting households were the source of most of the shares and shares flowing into other households in Kaktovik (see right figure on next page). Those who harvested more, gave more. But as the right figure below shows, medium harvest and some lower harvesting households also gave.
- High and medium harvest households with higher incomes were also the source of a lot of processing help and contributions that helped others get out hunting (the red line in the right figure shows these contributions). But medium harvest and some lower harvest households also helped processing food and contributed to the hunting effort. Contributions here were things like lending or repairing equipment, or giving gas, cash, and groceries.

Left Figure: Harvesting pounds by income groups



Right Figure: Giving of food and contributions by harvest and income groups



Left Figure: The height of the bars represents average harvest in pounds for different harvest and income groups. High harvest/high income and high harvest/medium Right Figure: The height of the bars represents average pounds shared income households on average gave out the most pounds and contributions to other households in Kaktovik.

The height of the bars in Figure 4b represents the average number of pounds or given out to other households as shares for helping by the same harvest and income groups. The red line shows the average number of contribution and processing ties also provided (given) by these groups.

The following is a breakdown of the number of households in each Harvest by Income group in Kaktovik (not including non-local teachers):

High Harvest - High Income = 10 households, High Harvest - Medium Income = 6, High Harvest - Low Income = 5

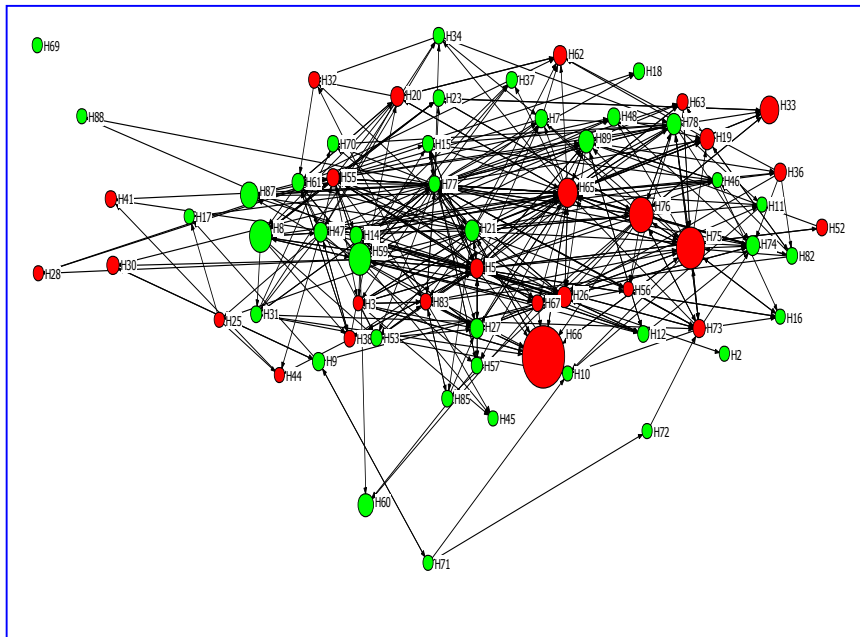
Medium Harvest - High Income = 8, Medium Harvest - Medium Income = 9, Medium Harvest - Low Income = 5

Low Harvest - High Income = 3, Low Harvest - Medium Income = 7, Low Harvest - Low Income = 11

Finding 6. Some Kaktovik households reported a high level of food insecurity.

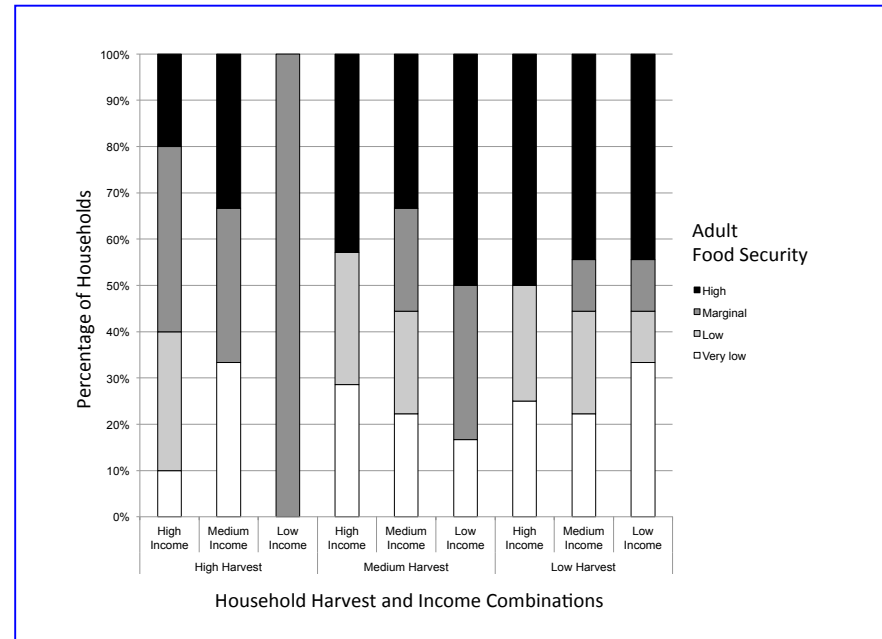
- We used a standardized set of questions from The US Department of Agriculture and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to ask about food security. For example, we asked, "Did people in your household have to skip meals because of not having enough food in their home?" or "Did you ever run out of either store bought or subsistence foods?"
- 43% of Kaktovik households reported that they experienced "very low" or "low" food security during the one-year research period.
- Some of these households (the red circles in the left figure below) are located on the edges of the food-sharing network, but others are more central and received a lot of food through sharing (the larger red circles are households that received more food through sharing).
- Households across income and harvest levels expressed different levels of concern about food security (right figure below). For example, 10% of high harvest - high income households indicated they experienced "very low" food security (white color within first bar right figure below).
- These findings raise questions about household well-being and people's vulnerabilities in the event of possible social, economic, or ecological changes. Who is food secure? Who needs additional help?

Left Figure: Food security network in Kaktovik



Left Figure: The circles in this network are all Kaktovik households. The lines represent all the different ways that households are connected to each other through sharing, etc. Green circles are food secure households and red circles are food insecure households. The size of the symbols shows the number of pounds coming to the households through sharing. There are red circles that are both large (receiving a lot from sharing) and small (receiving little from sharing).

Right Figure: Food security for different harvest and income groups



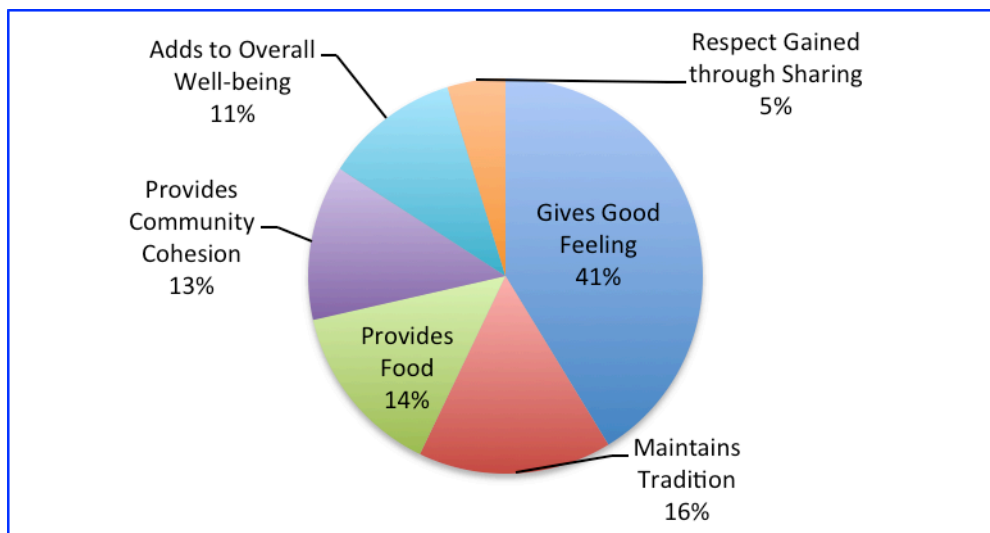
Right Figure: The bars in this graph show food security results for households grouped by harvest and income levels. Colors within bars shows percentage of households with high, marginal, low or very low food security for each group. High food security (black color) and low food security (white color) occur across all harvest and income groups.

Finding 7. Sharing contributed to community well-being and sharing happens in many ways.

We asked people to describe what sharing means to the community and how sharing occurs. These results are summarized below.

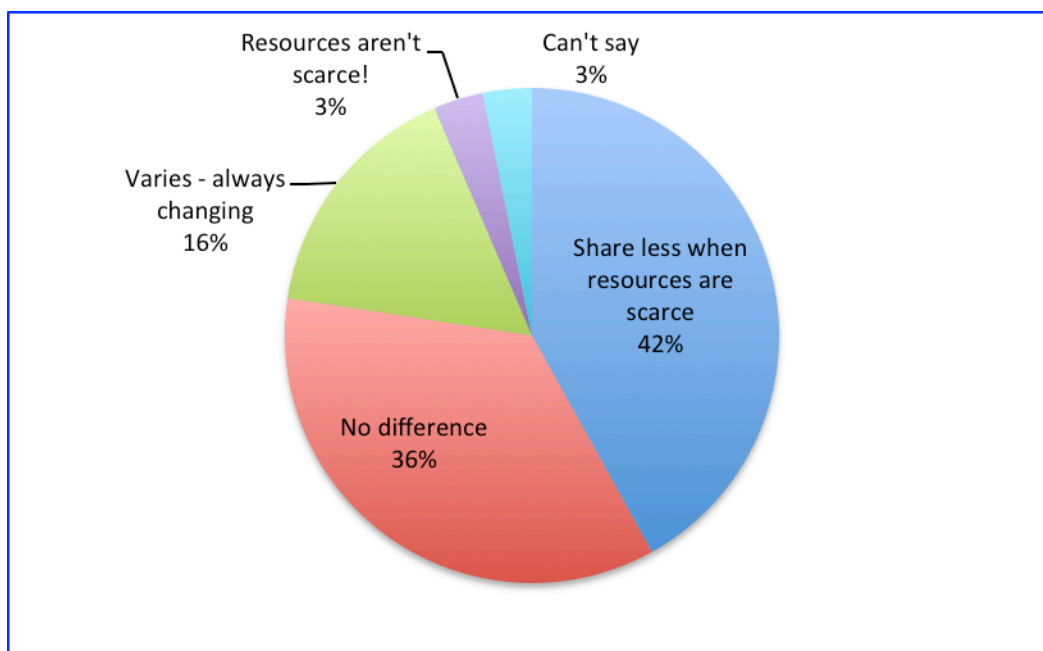
We asked the heads of 70 Kaktovik households: "*How does sharing contribute to the well-being of your community?*" 63 households responded to this question, and six themes emerged from people's answers. People said that Sharing i) provides good feelings, ii) maintains cultural traditions, iii) provides food, iv) maintains community cohesion, v) contributes to overall well-being, and vi) people gain respect through sharing. Many people talked about the positive feelings that come from sharing when asked how sharing contributes to community well-being (28 of 63 households). One person talked about the 'feel good' effect of sharing in this way: "It's big - everyone contributes - you can see the joy it brings - makes the day!" Another person described how those good feelings may go away when sharing is interrupted: "I believe it makes everyone happy - Light spirited, it connects people together. It brightens people's spirits. When no one shared with us we were down and sad about it. We wondered why, did we do something? We questioned ourselves. [It] made me feel even worse for not having any caribou to share with people. I'm always wishing I could have caught more to give more out." Sharing plays an important role in maintaining Iñupiaq traditions in Kaktovik (10 of 63), as the following person said: "Sharing honors traditional values and helps the spirituality of the community. The community comes together. ... It is part of forming the identity for children." One person simply stated, "It makes me feel like an Iñupiaq." Some people noted that sharing contributes to community cohesion in Kaktovik and helps to keep everyone close as a family (8/63 households). Another group of people focused on how sharing is important for redistributing food through the community and for providing wild foods to those who cannot hunt for themselves (9 of 63). Sharing helps to augment the foods that can be found and afforded at the store, as this person stated: "Sharing is important. [It is] expensive at the store. [There is] not enough money to go to the store and people don't have equipment to go out hunting." Some people chose to answer this question very broadly, which we coded as "overall well-being" (7 of 63). The following quote is one example: "Sharing is very spiritual. Contributes both to the economic aspect of the community but also the spiritual." Another respondent said, "[Sharing] makes it a better place to live." Finally, a small number of responses focused on the respect that comes from sharing and positive effects that respect has on community well-being (3 of 63).

Question: "How does sharing contribute to the well-being of your community?"



Another goal of the Sharing Project was to understand how people cope with change. To do that, we asked, **"How do households share differently in years when hunted food is scarce versus years when there is plenty?"** 31 households answered this question in the survey and five themes emerged from the responses. When comparing sharing in scarce versus plentiful years, i) people share less when resources are scarce (13), ii) there is no difference (11), iii) it varies (5), iv) wild foods have never been scarce (1), and v) can't say (1). Thirteen of 31 people said that less sharing occurs less in times of scarcity. However, people stated they still try to share whatever they can, as the following quote shows: "If [there is] less, then people share less but the sharing still happens!" When wild foods are less widely available, people tend to keep that food in the community and not send it out to friends and family members who live elsewhere. The following quote talks about what occurred during a year when fishing was poor: "We didn't send out fish to relatives. We kept it all and we fished later [longer]." But some noted that their sharing pattern does not change much during years of scarcity (11 of 31). Many also noted that the proportion of food shared remains the same: "We usually give out half of what we get. It doesn't matter how much total comes in." A few people noted that their sharing patterns are always changing, regardless of resource abundance (5 of 31). One person noted that several children recently moved home, so they are now sharing less than in the past. Another mentioned a recent marriage and the effect of this change on the household's current sharing pattern. Additionally, one person stated that resources have never been "scarce," so the question wasn't a good one!

Question: How do households share differently in years when hunted food is scarce versus years when there is plenty?



Conclusion

The Sharing Project documented a mixed subsistence-cash economy in Kaktovik (and Wainwright and Venetie) during a one-year period, and provides detailed information on the importance of subsistence social relationships to village households. Only a small part of the project's findings are presented in this summary document. The project's findings clearly show that subsistence is not just about harvesting. Subsistence includes the social relationships of cooperation, sharing, and helping that binds people together in villages in Alaska. In short, the findings of the project demonstrating how the Iñupiat value of "Aviktuaqatgiigñiq" is realized by the people of Kaktovik.

The Sharing Project Kaktovik Advisory Committee suggested that a short version of the final report should be distributed to all households in the community. We very much welcome your comments on this summary document. We are interested to know: do our findings match your perceptions of the subsistence-cash economy in Kaktovik? We truly value your feedback.

The success of the Sharing Project was made possible because of great support from the people of Kaktovik, including the Native Village of Kaktovik, the project's Advisory Committee, the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management, our local interviewers, and all those who agreed to be interviewed. Thank you! The project was funded by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) / the US Department of the Interior (M0712496) in a cooperative research agreement with the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Kaktovik Steering Committee members:

Fenton Rexford
Carla Kayotuk
Norajane Burns
Flora Rexford

And many thanks to our interviewing team:

Marie Rexford, Carla Sims-Kayotuk, Annie Tagarook,
Tori Sims, Darren Kayotuk, Raymond Aguvuluk and
Bonnie Spencer.

To give comments, or for more information about the UAF Sharing Project contact:

Gary Kofinas, University of Alaska Fairbanks, CELL: 307 690 5103 - gary.kofinas@alaska.edu
Shauna BurnSilver, Arizona State University, CELL: 907 699 9736 - sburnsil@asu.edu

AFES MP 2014-10

