

The Sharing Project

Summary Report for Wainwright Households

June 2014



"Sharing — It gives you a sense of being accepted, loved, cared for, and you have a sense of security. People who do the sharing have sense inside their soul they're helping."

— Quote by Wainwright resident

Introduction

In November 2009, a team of researchers from the UAF Sharing Project came to Wainwright and interviewed heads of households about their subsistence harvesting, sharing, and cooperative relationships. They also asked how people make a living combining subsistence, jobs, and other sources of cash. This document summarizes the important results of the research for Wainwright. The Sharing Project also worked in Kaktovik and Venetie and 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 people distribute harvest, cooperate in harvesting, share, and give out shares among households – have not been well documented. Proposed oil and gas development, climate change, and possible economic changes may affect North Slope households in the future, creating a need for good information. The goal of the Sharing Project was to document both harvest and the sharing and cooperation that are part of Wainwright'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, the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management, Arizona State University, and the Traditional Councils of Wainwright, Kaktovik and Venetie. Researchers worked with local advisory committees in each village to design and complete the study. Funding for the project came from BOEM (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management), formerly called MMS.

How did we do this research?

In November 2009 your household may have been interviewed by members of the Sharing Project research team. The interview asked detailed questions about household economies, including jobs. The main part of the survey asked how much subsistence food and other things like equipment, cash, gas, and labor came households based on social relationships like shares from cooperative hunting, shares households received from helping others in hunting or fishing, food shared with households, and trading or purchases. Interviewers asked detailed questions about the following 7 "core species" hunted and fished around Wainwright:

- Bowhead
- Beluga
- Bearded Seal
- Caribou
- Smelt
- Geese
- Ducks

We also asked questions about household food security, how sharing affects well-being in Wainwright, and how sharing practices change. At the end of 10 days of interviewing, we had interviewed 96% of all Wainwright households (146 households in total). Interview questions asked about the period from September 2008 to October 2009.

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 technical report.

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

Overall, Wainwright households hunted 46 different species and used 59 different species (eating, sewing, carving, trading, or giving away).

- 84% of households gave these wild foods to others and 97% received food from others.
- Average per capita (per person) harvest in Wainwright was 680.1 lbs.

For the 7 core species:

- 72% of households (106 of 146) engaged in hunting or fishing for Bearded seal, caribou, Smelt, geese, or ducks.
- Another 21% of households (31) either took part in bowhead or beluga whaling, contributed to the crews, or attended captains' feasts or a *Nalukataq*.
- Only 6% of households in Wainwright (9) neither hunted for any core species, took part in whaling or attended feasts.
- 86% of households (127 of 146) received food from sharing.
- 84% of households stated that they gave subsistence food to other households.
- The average amount a Wainwright household received through sharing was 305 pounds.
- Only 1.3% of households (3) neither received food through sharing nor took part in any subsistence harvesting.

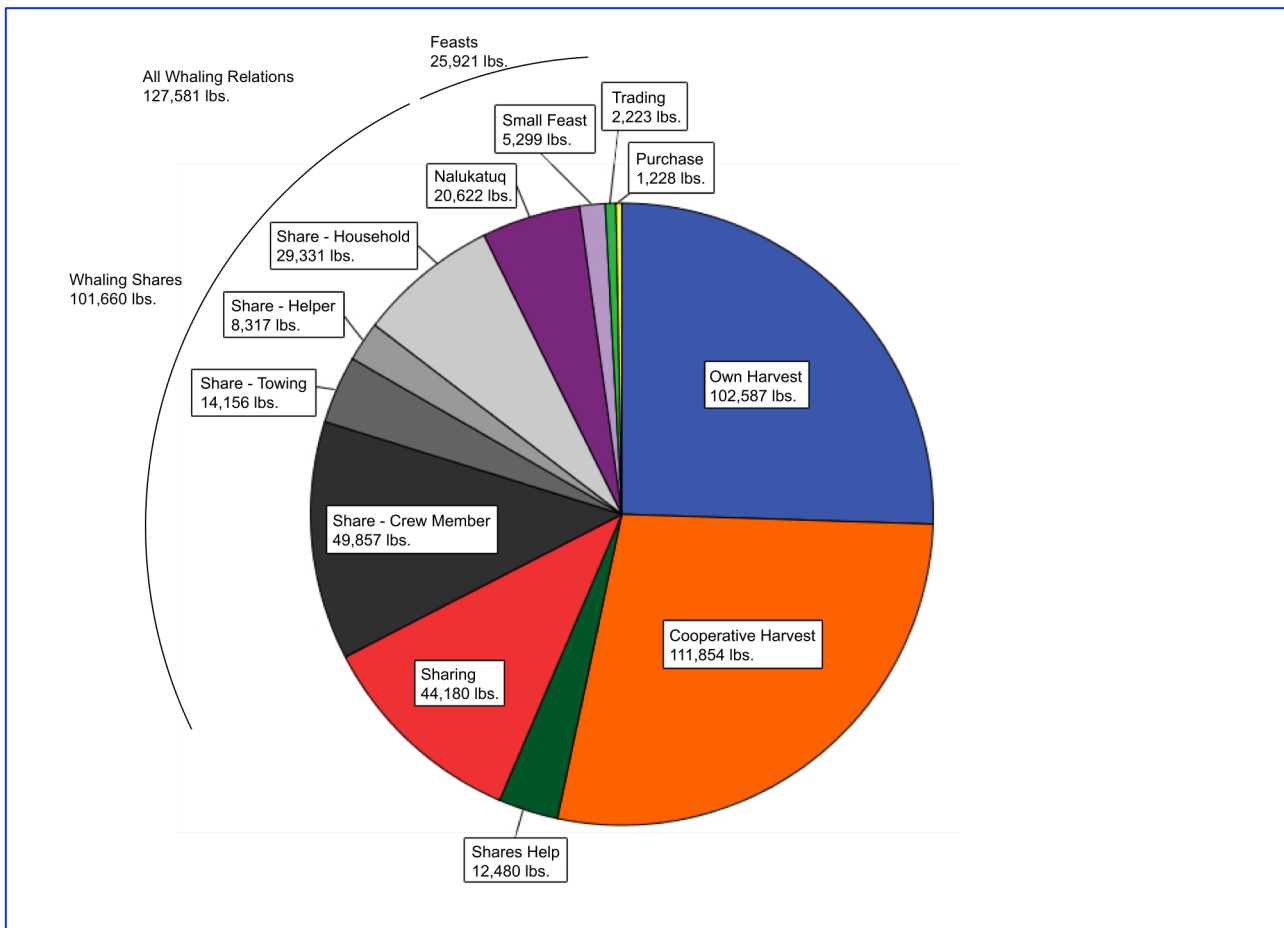


Finding 2: Most of the food flowing into Wainwright households was based on social relationships that link households together.

- **Over 404,082 total pounds of subsistence food flowed into Wainwright households during the one-year period.**
- **75% of the subsistence food flowing into households is based on social relationships between HHs.**
- Only 25% of the total (102,587 lbs) flowed into households from household members hunting or fishing alone (blue slice in figure below).

In the figure below:

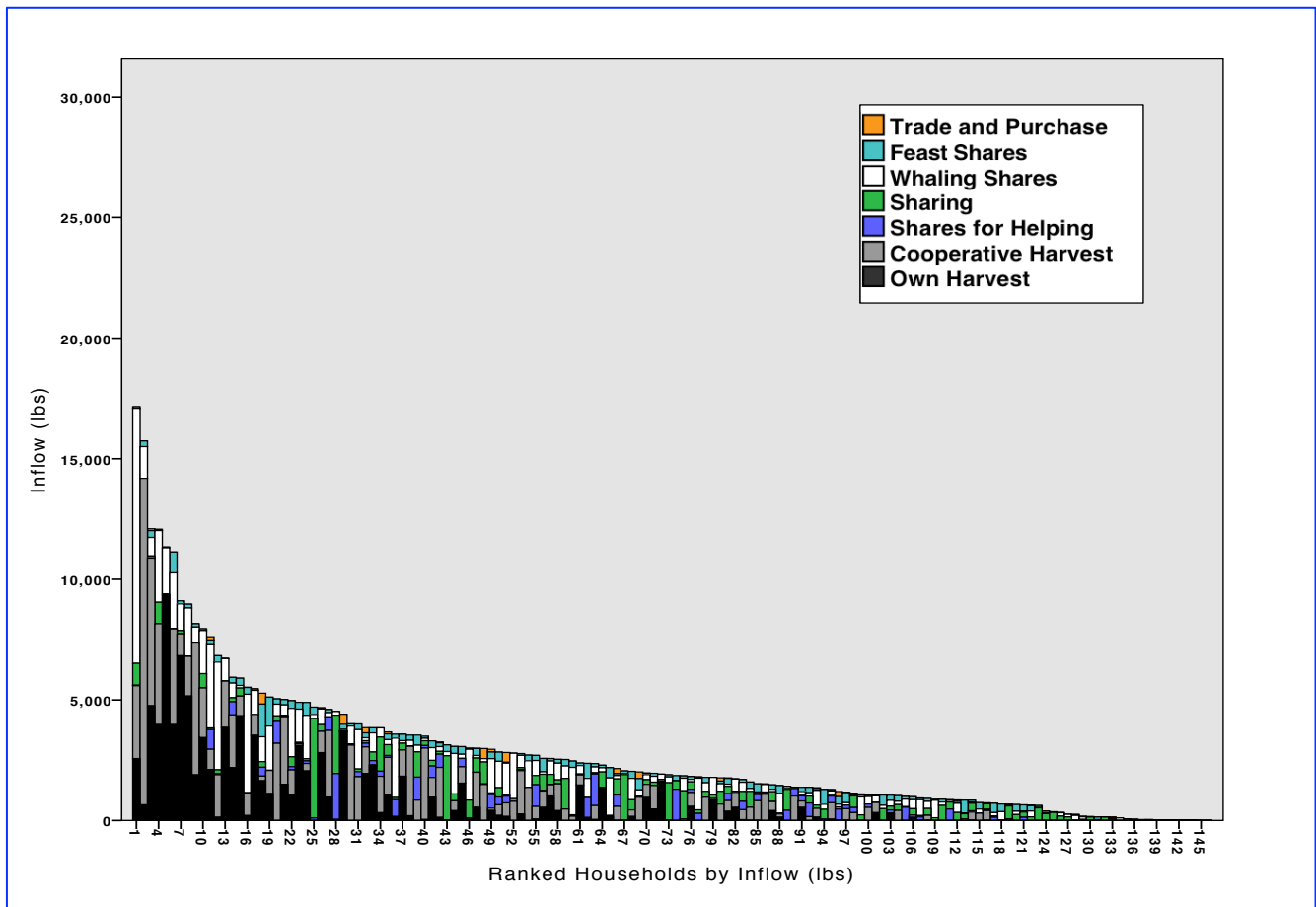
- Orange represents shares to households from cooperative hunting among households (28% of total or 111,854 lbs),
- Dark green is flows of shares of meat or fish to households who didn't go hunting (3% or 12,480 lbs) but helped others get out hunting with contributions of gas, cash, or equipment, etc.
- The red slice shows 44,180 lbs (11% of total) coming to households from sharing (gifting). All the grey slices combined (127,581 lbs, or 31% 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 3,461 lbs (less than 1% of total) flowed into all households from trading (green) and purchases (yellow).



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

Households differed in how much subsistence food comes in and how food came into households. The figure below shows how ALL subsistence food (in pounds) flowed into individual Wainwright households based on different kinds of relationships.

- Some households had high inflows (HHs on the left - tall bars). Others had less (HHs on the right - shorter bars).
- Households on the left side brought in a lot of food based on their own hunting or hunting with other households. Households on the right side of the figure hunted less. 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 color).
- This finding shows that sharing and shares were very important for those households not hunting actively.
- 30% of households hunted or fished 76% of all the food that was successfully hunted in the village.
- This pattern is very similar to other villages in Alaska. Much of what these very productive households bring in is then redistributed to other households.



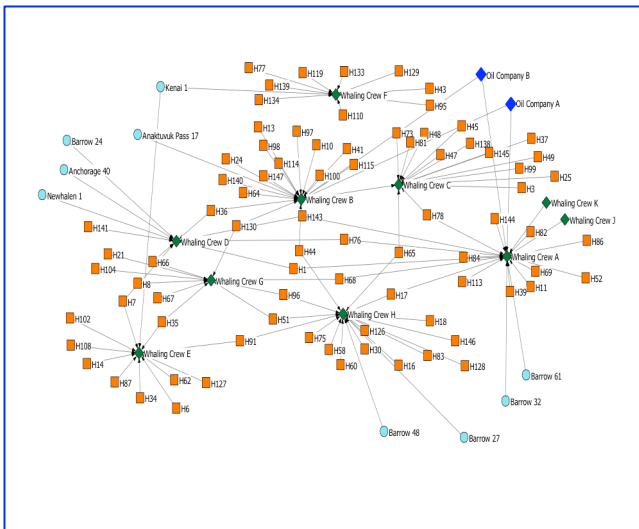
This figure shows all the inflows of food to Wainwright households. Each vertical bar in this figure is a household. The colors inside each bar show the kinds of relationships that account for how each household brings in their subsistence food. The height of each bar shows the total number of pounds 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) and household shares (Beluga).

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

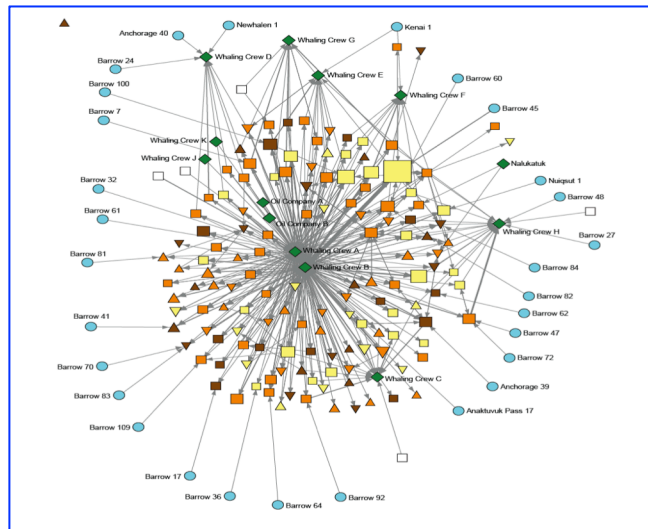
This finding of the study is not a surprise - North Slope villagers have made this point for years. Results from the Sharing Project emphasize how important sharing and distribution patterns are to the community.

- Wainwright Bowhead whaling crews landed two whales in the spring of 2009 and one whale in the autumn. This was the first fall whale in living memory and was a huge cause for celebration.
- 100 households, captains, crew members and organizations contributed in some way to the efforts of the 8 whaling crews, by giving money, gas, equipment, food, labor, or cooking (biscuits!) for the crews. The figure below on the left shows the whaling contribution network.
- Two crews landed the 3 whales in 2009. These 2 crews (green diamonds in the figure on the right) are at the center of the bowhead whaling distribution network.
- All active captains distributed whale shares to their crew members. There were 74 crew members from 53 different Wainwright 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. The whale that was landed in autumn was distributed entirely as household shares, so it was divided differently than the whales landed in spring.
- **On average each Wainwright household received 285 pounds of Bowhead that year.**
- Wainwright households also received 11,825 lbs. of Beluga in total. 119 households (81.5%) received shares of beluga. 41 households contributed hunters, cutting labor or boats to Beluga hunting.

Left-hand Figure: Contributions to whaling crews



Righthand Figure: Distribution of whale to households



Figures: Green symbols represent different whaling crews, dark blue are other organizations, orange/brown/yellow symbols are Wainwright households and light blue are households from other villages. Left Figure; Wainwright households, households from other villages (9) and organizations (2) contributed to the efforts of the whaling crews (arrows are going into crews). Right Figure, the two successful whaling crews distributed whale in many different ways (arrows go from crews to other crews and households). Wainwright households also received whale through sharing from households in other villages (shown as blue circles).

Finding 5: Households in Wainwright were part of a mixed subsistence-cash economy where having a source of income is important for subsistence and well-being.

- Over 85% of households (113 of 133) made a living combining harvesting with employment and some other source(s) of income (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Combinations of household activities

Wainwright households in the mixed economy (2008 - 2009)				Total
	JOBS ONLY	Harvest/ Retirement/ Dividends/ Assistance (NO JOBS)	Harvest/ JOBS/ Retirement/ Dividends/ Assistance	
% (Number of Households)	0.8% (1)	14.3% (19)	85.0% (113)	100.0% (133)

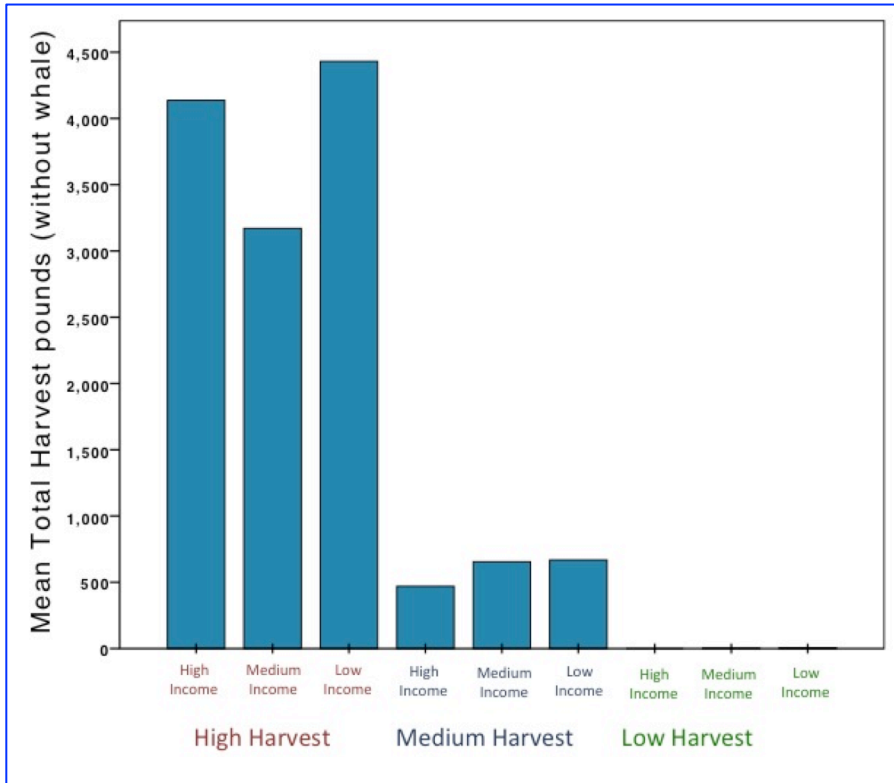
Note: This table does not include non-local teacher households. It shows only data for 133 of 146 total HHs.

So how did the cash and subsistence economies combine in Wainwright?

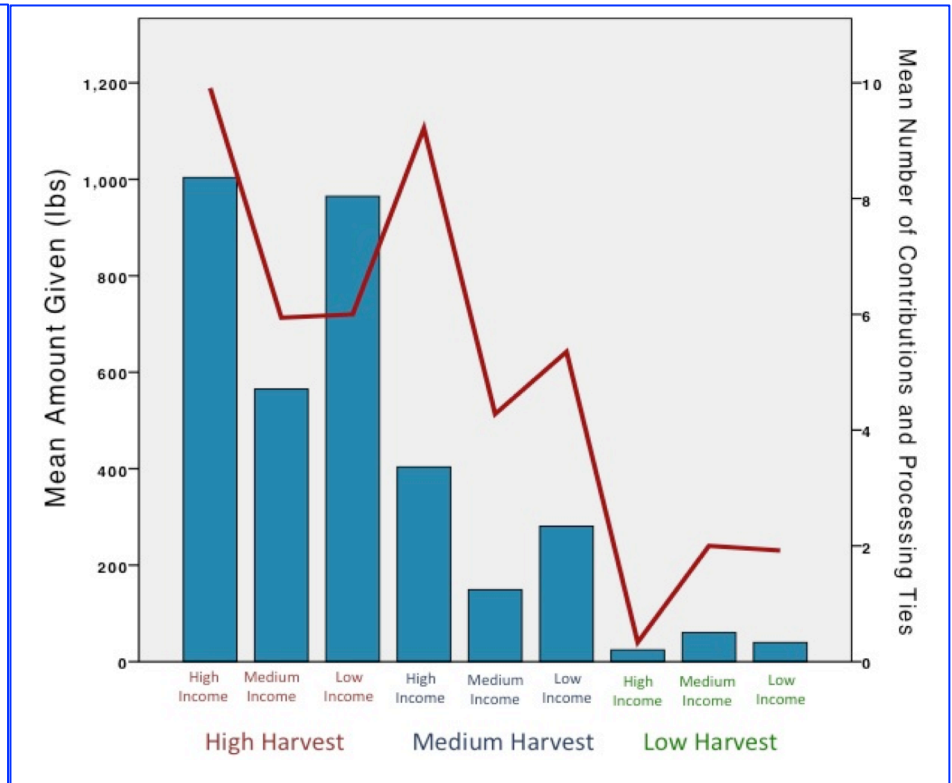
[Note: The following results do not include pounds harvested from whaling]

- Mean HH wage income was \$51,360.48 and mean HH income was \$86,915.
- Looking at the top 1/3 of harvesting households (44 of 133) in Wainwright, all but 3 households had people who were employed. Even the remaining 3 high harvesting households with no employment had income coming in from combinations of retirement, dividends or social assistance.
- Half of high harvesting households (22 of 44) also had annual incomes ranked in the top third of all village incomes. **In addition to having high incomes, mature, large households with active hunters and a lot of hunting equipment (that costs money!) were the most productive.** However, 17 high harvesting households had medium incomes and 5 high harvesting households had low incomes (see left hand figure on next page). **Having access to cash is important for subsistence, but it is not the only factor contributing to high harvesting.**
- Both high and medium harvesting households were the source of significant sharing and shares to other households in Wainwright (See figure on right of the next page). Those households that harvested more, gave more. But low harvesting households also gave.
- High and medium harvest households were 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 low harvest households also helped processing food and contributed to the hunting effort. Contributions here are 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 non-whale harvest in pounds for different harvest and income groups.

Right Figure: The height of the bars represents average pounds shared or given out to other households as shares for helping by the same harvest and income groups. The red line is the average number of contribution and processing ties also provided (given) by these groups. High harvest/high income and high harvest/low income households on average gave out the most pounds and contributions to other households in Wainwright, but other groups give significant amounts as well.

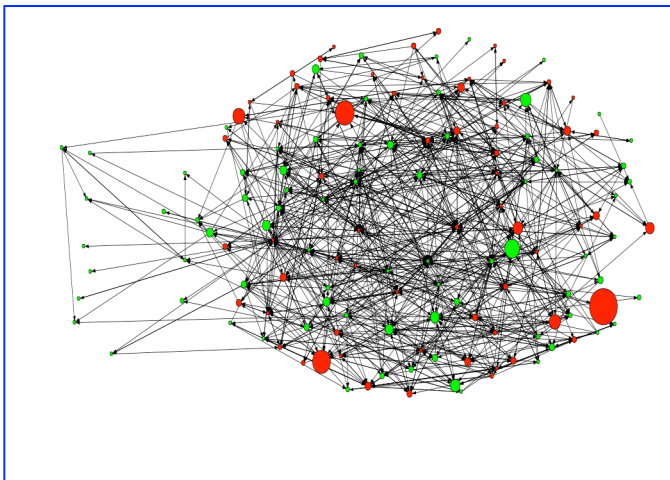
The following is a breakdown of the number of households in each Harvest by Income group (not including non-local teachers):

- High Harvest - High Income = 21 households, High Harvest - Medium Income = 17, High Harvest - Low Income = 6
- Medium Harvest - High Income = 14 , Medium Harvest - Medium Income = 17, Medium Harvest - Low Income = 14
- Low Harvest - High Income = 9, Low Harvest - Medium Income = 11, Low Harvest - Low Income = 24

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

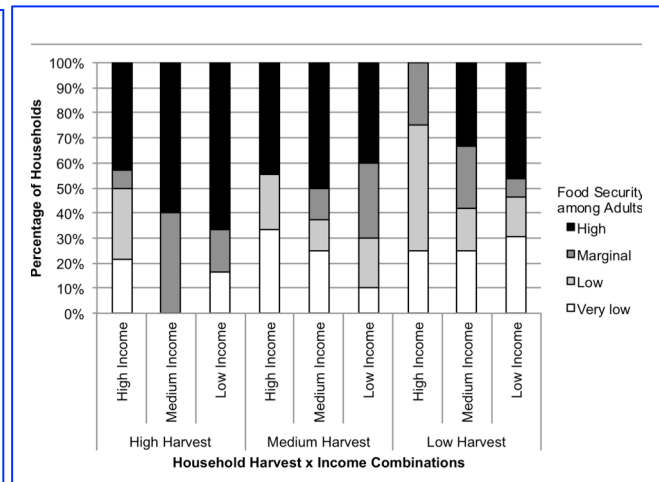
- We used a standardized set of questions from the US Department of Agriculture and Alaska Department of Fish and Game to ask about food security. For example, we asked: "Did people have to skip meals because of not having enough food in their home?"
- 43% of Wainwright households reported that they experienced "very low" or "low" food security during the one-year research period.
- Some of these households (red circles in the left figure below) are located on the edges of the food sharing network. These households are less connected to other households. But other households are more central and received a lot of food through sharing.
- Households across income and harvest levels expressed different levels of concern about food security (The right figure below). For example, 20% of high harvesters - high income earning households indicated they experienced "very low" food security (white color within first bar in right figure below).
- These findings raise questions about household 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 Wainwright



Left Figure: The circles in this network are all Wainwright 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.

Right Figure: Food security for harvest and income groups



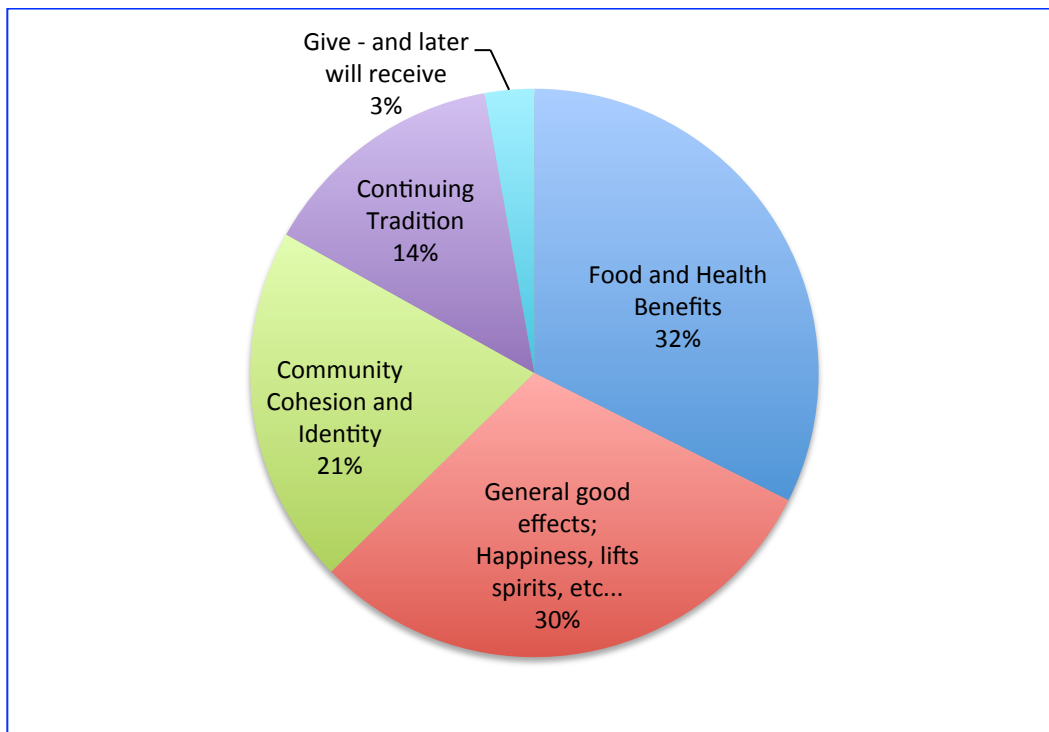
Right Figure: The bars in this graph show food security results for households grouped by harvest and income levels. Colors within bars shows percentage of households with high, marginal, low or very low food security for each group. High food security (black color) and low food security (white color) occurred across all harvest and income groups, except High Harvest - Medium Income HHs, which had no households with low or very low food security.

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

The survey included open-ended questions where people were asked what sharing means to the community and how sharing occurs. These results are summarized below.

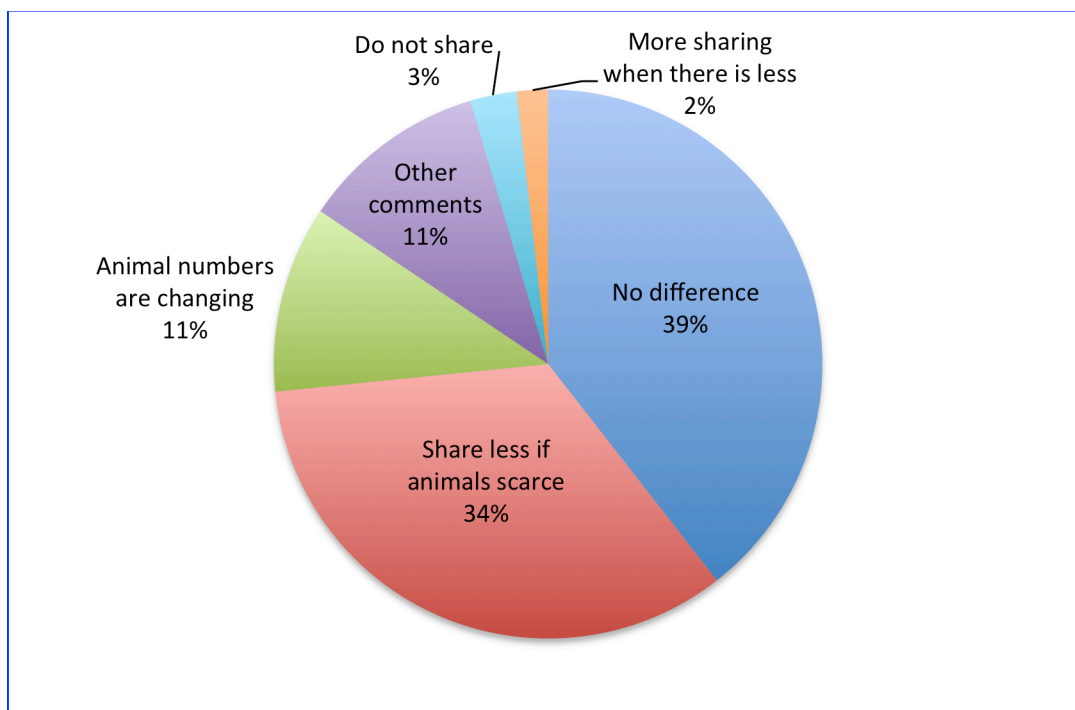
We asked the heads of 146 Wainwright households, "**How does sharing contribute to the well-being of your community?**" 142 HHs responded to this question and five themes emerged from people's answers. People reported that that Sharing provides i) food and health benefits, ii) positive effects for people, iii) community cohesion and identity, iv) a means of continuing cultural traditions, and v) a means of giving and later receiving. People noted that sharing helps to ensure that everyone in Wainwright has access to wild foods, even those who are unable to go hunting themselves (46/142 HHs). "When we share with our community, it helps the health of our community because there are some people who can't hunt for themselves." Many people also mentioned the general positive effects of sharing on the community (43/142 HHs). The following are words from peoples' answers that expressed 'positive effects': smile, happy, feel good, love, in our hearts, lifts spirits, feel better, full of joy, and very good. A group of people noted how sharing contributes to community cohesion (29/142 HHs). Giving and receiving wild foods fosters a sense of community and caring: "Everyone becoming one family through sharing; just like being one big family. Keeps the village strong." Others discussed the role that sharing plays in linking the past with the present (20/142 HHs). "It keeps the culture alive. [There is] joy in knowing somebody got something and we know we're going to get some. We're depending on our children now that we're getting older and that helps the community." Finally, a small number of people mentioned the reciprocity associated with sharing and how that contributes to community well-being (4/142 HHs): "If we give something to somebody, they give back. Like if we have ducks after duck season, we'll give them and if they have caribou, they'll give to us. It just goes on and on."

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



To understand how people cope with change we asked: "**How do households share differently in years when hunted food is scarce versus years when there is plenty?**" Six themes emerged from peoples' responses and 109 HHs answered this question. i) No difference in sharing, ii) people share less when animals are scarce, iii) animal numbers are changing, iv) other comments, v) we do not share, and vi) we share more when there is less. Many people said there is no difference in sharing between good and bad harvesting years (43/109); people are always sharing. People emphasized that it is important to share, even if one is only able to provide a small amount: "[We] share every time we catch, even if it's only a little - [we] still give." Another large group of people stated that more sharing occurs during years when there are a lot of wild foods and less sharing occurs when wild foods are scarcer (37/109 HHs). The following quote is similar to many of the comments: "[In] years we had lots of traditional food we shared more. [It is] harder to share when you had little food." Three (of 109) people said they do not share when animals are not abundant and two (of 109) stated that "they shared more in tough times."

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



Conclusion

The Sharing Project documented the mixed subsistence-cash economy of Wainwright (and Kaktovik and Venetie) during a one-year period, and generated detailed information on the role of subsistence relationships to village households. Only a 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 bind people together in communities of the North. In short, the findings of the project demonstrate how the Iñupiat value of "*Aviktuaqatgiigñiq*" is realized by the people of Wainwright.

The Sharing Project Wainwright Advisory Committee suggested that a short version of the final report should be distributed to all village households. 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 Wainwright? We value your feedback.

The work of the Sharing Project was made possible because of great support from the people of Wainwright, including village leadership, the Wainwright Traditional Council, the project's advisory committee, 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) through a cooperative agreement with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The study also benefited from support from the North Slope Department of Wildlife Management.

Thank you Wainwright Advisory Committee members:

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Ida Panik
Lucille Mayer
Lizzie Marie Bodfish
Joseph Ahmaogak
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Raymond Aguvuluk
Joyce Captain
Ronnie Kimoktuak

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