

WENZEL, George W., 2008 *Sometimes Hunting Can Seem Like Business: Polar Bear Sport Hunting in Nunavut*, Edmonton, Canadian Circumpolar Institute Press, 120 pages.

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Less than a decade ago, the hunting of polar bears by both Inuit and recreational trophy hunters received little public attention. The focus of international media and environmentalist attention was the Canadian seal hunt, with European importation bans in the 1980s leading to the demise of the seal hunt in numerous Inuit communities. All the while polar bear hunting activity remained generally ignored. All of this was to change in the middle years of this decade due to rapidly growing international awareness of the impact of anthropogenic climate change on polar environments, and with the emergence of the polar bear as the poster species of global warming. In the past five years, the polar bear has been raised to iconic status by environmentalists and the media, and this elevation has brought a growing public awareness and outcry regarding the hunting of bears both by Inuit and by recreational trophy hunters. Emerging alongside, and often in response, is a growing body of social science literature that explores the social, economic, semiotic, and cultural role of both subsistence and recreational polar bear hunting, and the cultural history of anti-polar bear hunting discourse (see Freeman and Foote 2009). George Wenzel has been at the forefront of much of this recent scholarship, and this, his most recent contribution, is a welcome addition.

This short book (114 pages, including appendices) is a stripped-down, bare bones chronicle of the history, organisation, and socio-economic role of polar bear trophy

hunting in three Nunavut communities. Unusually for anthropological scholarship, Wenzel makes no cross-cultural comparisons, nor does he make reference to other forms of trophy or subsistence hunting in Nunavut or elsewhere. He does not theorise or attempt to draw larger, broader conclusions from these three small-scale case studies. This is, in essence, a report, which presents the raw data of the author's research. All of this, however, is to the book's advantage. In a short space, Wenzel gets straight to the point, allowing his research in the three communities to speak for itself, providing in-depth social and economic accounts of the organisation, benefits, and costs of recreational trophy hunting, and making clear that while trophy hunt outfitting is organised and executed following the tenets of *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* (Inuit traditional knowledge) each of the three communities has its own unique and community-specific way of doing this.

The three communities in question are Clyde River, Resolute Bay, and Taloyoak. Wenzel begins with a socio-economic introduction to each community, painting a picture of the mixed subsistence economies familiar to all scholars of the North. He goes on to explore the role of the polar bear as an economic resource, from its commoditisation from the 1850s to the 1970s, to the current and evolving role the species plays in most Inuit communities. Between 1970 and 1985, rapid social, political, and conservation change sowed the seeds for recreational trophy hunting of polar bears as it exists today. Socio-technological changes such as sedentarisation and the replacement of dogs with skidoos, the effects of the sealskin ban, and the successful completion of the international Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears all played their role in the transformation of both subsistence and trophy hunting of polar bears. The author recounts how, between 1985 and 2000, a growing number of Nunavut communities diverted part of their quota into trophy hunting, and how successful U.S. hunters returning home with large trophy bears enticed even more hunters north in search of an impressive bear for their trophy rooms.

The author provides an exhaustive account of how the hunt is organised in each of the three communities. *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* figures strongly as, irrespective of whether outfitting is conducted by Hunters and Trappers Organisations (HTOs) or by private local outfitters, the *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* principles with regard to *ilagiit* (extended family) remain strong. The social and cultural elements of *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* are also apparent in the relationship between trophy hunting and the subsistence hunt, and in the benefits and costs of the trophy hunt to community life. Economically, the trophy hunt benefits many individuals, from guides to seamstresses and artists, but these economic benefits have far-reaching consequences, as money is reinvested in the subsistence economy, leading to the innumerable social and cultural benefits associated with the hunting, preparation, and consumption of traditional country food.

What is clear from this book is that outfitting of polar bear trophy hunting at the community level is heavily influenced by a host of external factors, over which HTOs and local outfitters have little or no control. At the territorial level (Nunavut's Memoranda of Understanding) and the international level (the Agreement on the

Conservation of Polar Bears) and due to laws passed in other jurisdictions (the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act and the E.U. sealskin ban), Inuit in these small communities have adapted their practices to their use of their allocated quotas and their outfitting of the hunt. From the time of conducting the research to the writing and publication of the book, territorial, national, and international laws on hunting of polar bears have evolved rapidly, and the three communities involved have attempted to adapt their practices to these changes. What emerges, then, is a picture of three typical (but unique) Inuit communities making the most of an important resource while under increasing international pressure to stop.

One senses an urgency in this book, as the author attempts to tell a story that is evolving before his eyes. Despite changes since the research was conducted in 2001 (with supplementary research in 2006-2007), the ethnographic data in this volume remain valid, and are a testament to the important socio-economic role of the polar bear in many Inuit communities.

The book is not without flaws. The maps are poor, both in their graphic quality and in the font of the text used. None of the maps show the location of the three communities within Nunavut; while the use of dots on the hunting maps is confusing, making it unclear whether the dots cover an entire area or whether each dot represents a specific hunting location. Chapter 6, the shortest chapter at only four and a half pages, explores community issues related to the trophy hunt. In these few pages the author introduces us to the consternation over the regulation of the hunt in Taloyoak, the conflict in Resolute Bay between the North Baffin population and the Quebec exile population over opportunities to participate in outfitting of the hunt, and the concern amongst some Clyde River residents that the trophy hunt may not be *inuktitut* (the proper Inuit way). Even though Wenzel informs the reader (p. iv) that the analysis is from an anthropological perspective, he has neglected to analyse these issues in this chapter. This reviewer was left wanting more explanation, more background, and more anthropology in Chapter six. A similar criticism pertains to the author's brief mention (p. 88) of the dialectic between money and country food in the mixed economy of modern Inuit communities, there being a lack of satisfactory explanation or analysis.

Overall, however, this is a welcome addition to Inuit scholarship, providing a very modern take on the polar bear's role in Inuit culture. The book highlights the uniqueness of each community in its organisation of the trophy hunt, suggesting that blanket, Nunavut-wide solutions may not always be appropriate to this or other socio-environmental issues. Despite the ongoing and rapid changes taking place in communities across Nunavut with regard to the polar bear hunt, these three case studies stand as a testament to the importance of the hunt, to the enduring role of the polar bear in Inuit life, and to the fact that subsistence hunting in all its permutations and the environmental and social knowledge necessary for successful hunting continue to play an enduring role in the contemporary North.

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