

The Indigenous Whaling of Chukotka at the Turn of the Millennium

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Chukchi and Siberian Yupik have a thousand-year history of relations with whales. Today, international, federal, regional, and customary law all regulate Chukotka' aboriginal whaling. As a member of the International Whaling Commission, the Russian Federation has fulfilled the quotas of bowhead and gray whales for the Chukotka' aboriginal whaling since the mid-1990s. Since 2003, quotas have been self-managed by indigenous organizations under the control of the Chukotka government, which is explained by the need to provide financial support for traditional subsistence. Distribution of whaling products is done in accordance with customary law. The modern method of the Chukotka' whaling has preserved the ancient basis of the practice. Whalers use a swivel harpoon connected to a buoy to mark and then harvest the whale using Darting guns and rifles. The Chukotka' whalers still use spears for whaling, though it is rare. The use of satellite devices and internet programs instead of traditional knowledge for navigation, and outboard engines instead of oars and sails, has changed the structure and size of the whaling teams. In turn, these factors negatively affect family and community ties and, as a consequence, change the worldview of modern Chukotka' indigenous hunters.