

# Communities Living With Polar Bears:

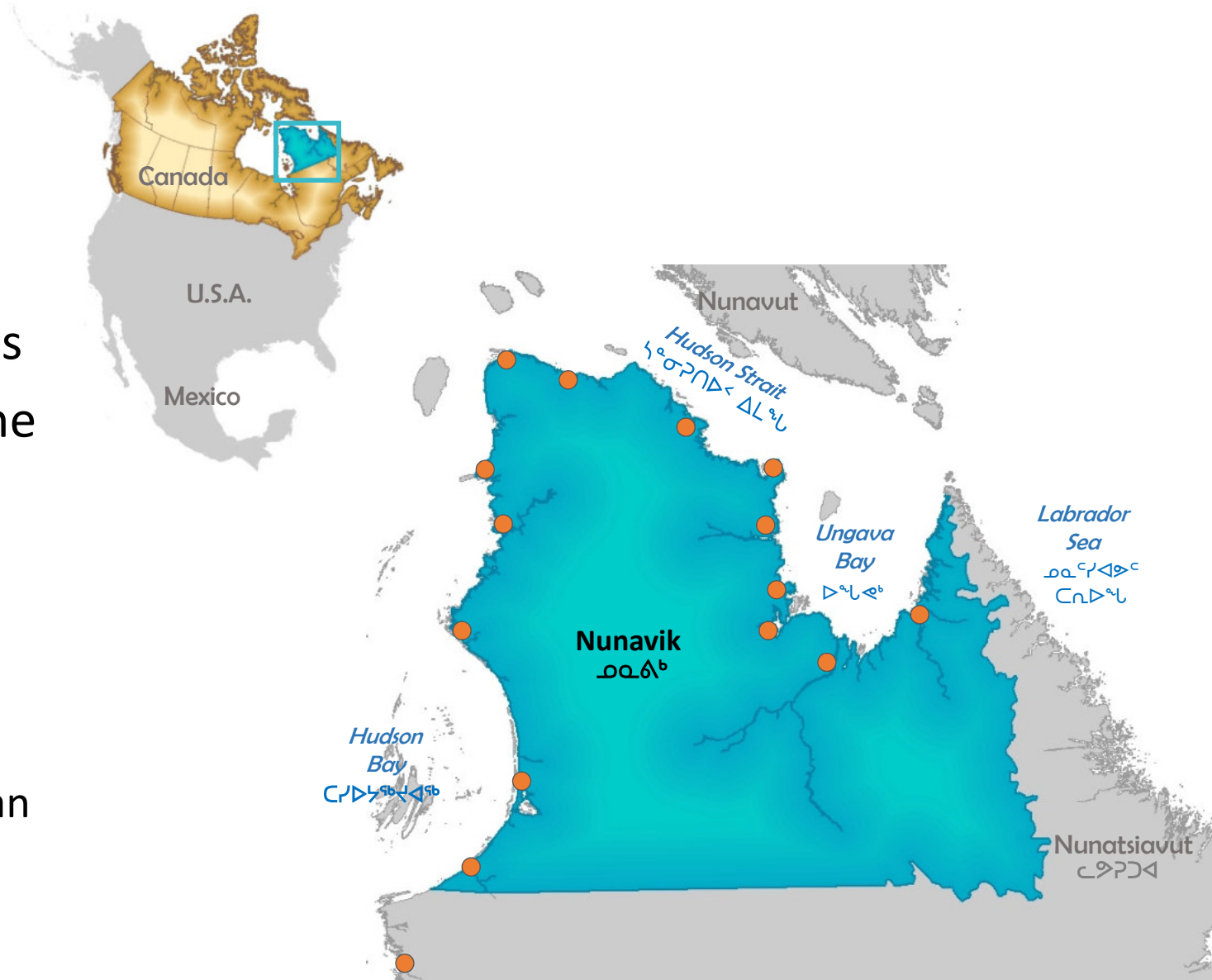
## Challenges for Management and Realities for Inuit

Gregor Gilbert  
Mark Basterfield

Conflict Between People and Polar Bears in the Arctic:  
How to Address an Increasing Issue?  
CAFF Arctic Biodiversity Congress  
Rovaniemi, Finland  
October 12, 2018

# Nunavik

- Approximately 12,000 Inuit
- 14 Coastal Communities
- Strong connection to the land and environment
  - Most continue to practice subsistence harvesting
  - Caribou, beluga, polar bear, seal, charr, trout, walrus, geese, ptarmigan





**LP<sup>é</sup>Λ<sup>é</sup>**  
**Société Makivik**  
**Makivik Corporation**

- Makivik Corporation
  - Represents the Inuit of Nunavik
  - Mandate to promote and protect the Rights of Nunavik Inuit enshrined in:
    - Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution
    - James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement
    - Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement
  - To promote the economic, social and cultural well-being of Nunavik Inuit



- Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board
  - Wildlife Management decisions
  - Members appointed Government and Makivik
  - Consider Scientific and Inuit Knowledge equally
  - Harvesting rights limited only to the extent necessary for conservation



LP<sup>é</sup>Λ<sup>é</sup>

Société Makivik  
Makivik Corporation

- Gregor Gilbert

- Senior Research and Development Department Coordinator
- Policy and management recommendations
  - Wildlife Management
  - Environmental legislation
  - Inuit Rights
  - Physical sciences
  - Inuit Knowledge

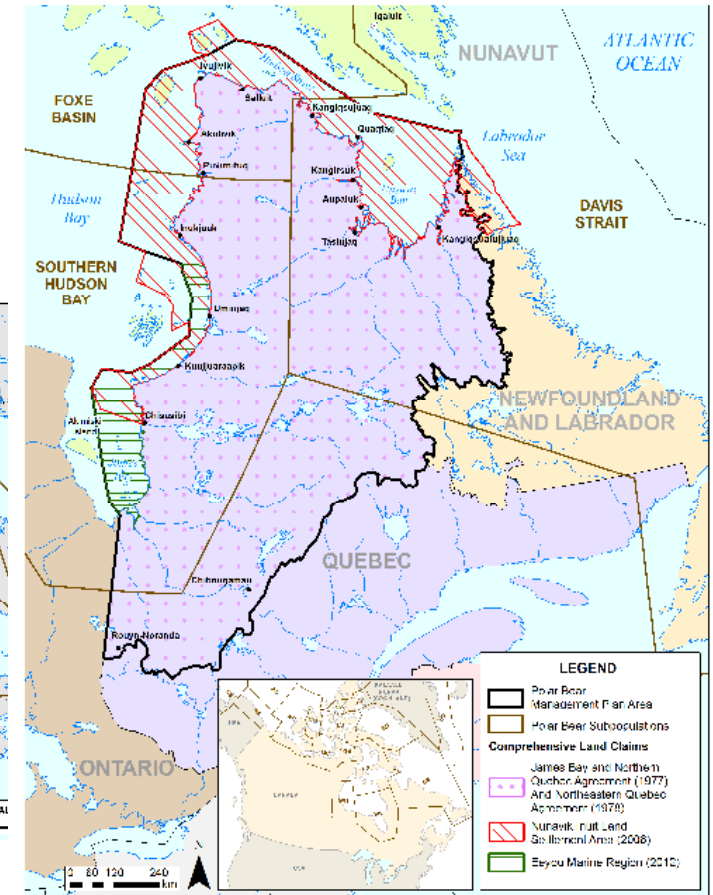
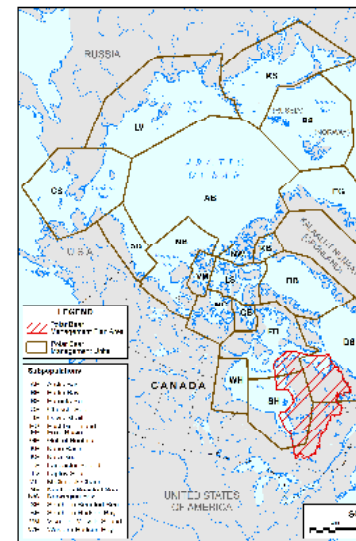


- Mark Basterfield

- A/ Director of Wildlife Management
- Make recommendations for management decisions
- Previously: Researcher with Trent University
  - Nunavut IK study on polar bears

# Polar Bears and Nunavik

- 3 Polar Bear Subpopulations – Scientific Assessments
  - South Hudson Bay
    - 780 bears (2016)
    - Recent decreases in abundance
  - Foxe Basin
    - 2 585 bears (2010)
    - Stable
  - Davis Strait
    - 2 158 bears (2007)
    - Stable



## Slide 5

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**MB1**

Not sure which map to use - I think the one with just Quebec

Mark Basterfield; 11.10.2018



# Nunavik Management Challenges

- Uncertainty in population estimates
- International pressure vs. Constitutionally protected harvesting rights
- Safety concerns
  - Include Defense of Life and Property?
- **Producing decisions that represent those affected by them**



NUNAVIK INUIT KNOWLEDGE  
AND OBSERVATIONS OF POLAR BEARS



Southern Hudson Bay subpopulation

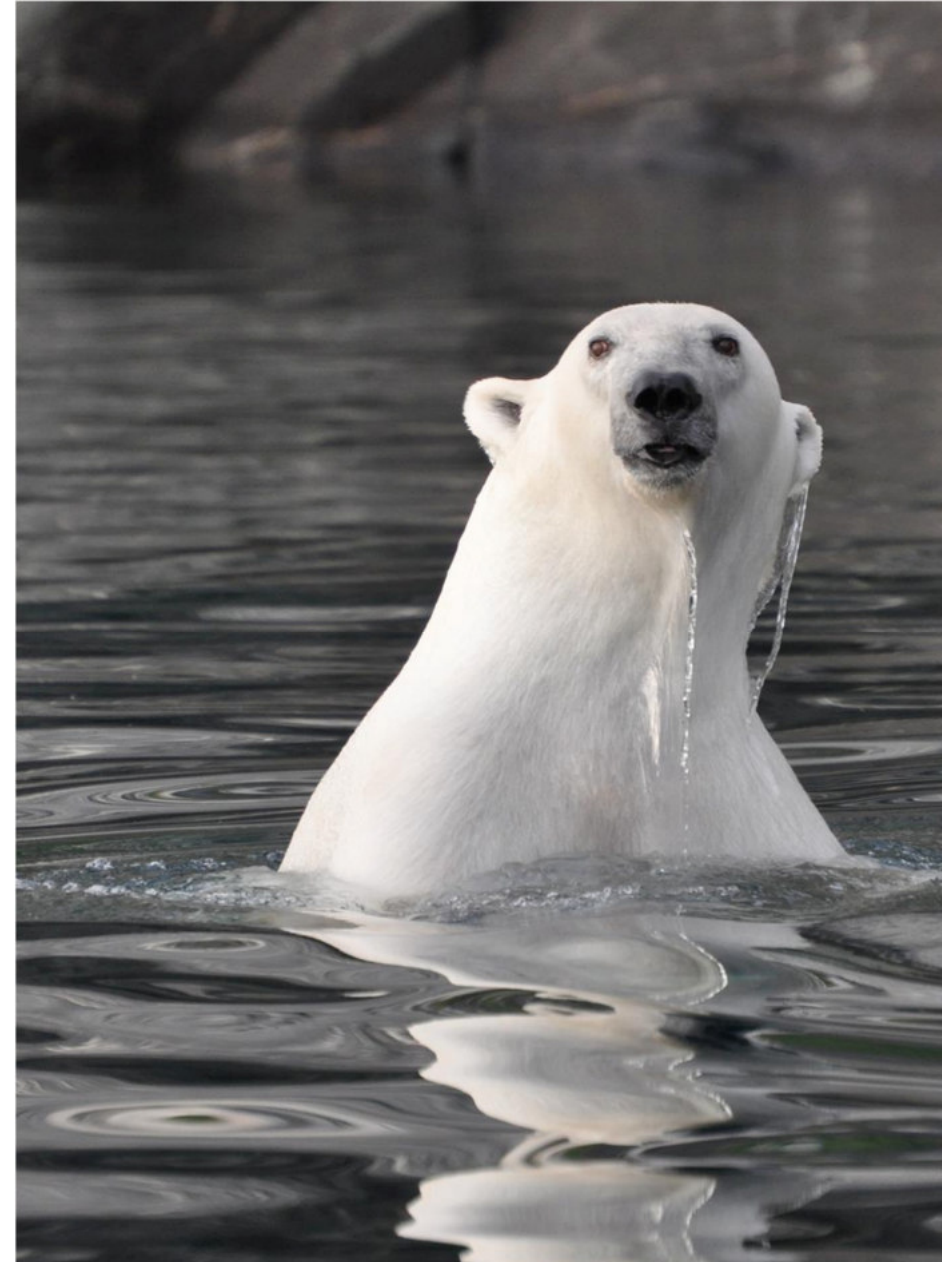
- 14 communities
- 139 participants
- Comprehensive study
  - Biology & Ecology
  - Population trends
  - Values
  - Importance
  - Management



# Inuit attitudes towards Nanuit

*“Elders used to tell us that [polar bears] have a spirit too. That’s why we don’t want to kill them for nothing.” – Resident of Aupaluk*

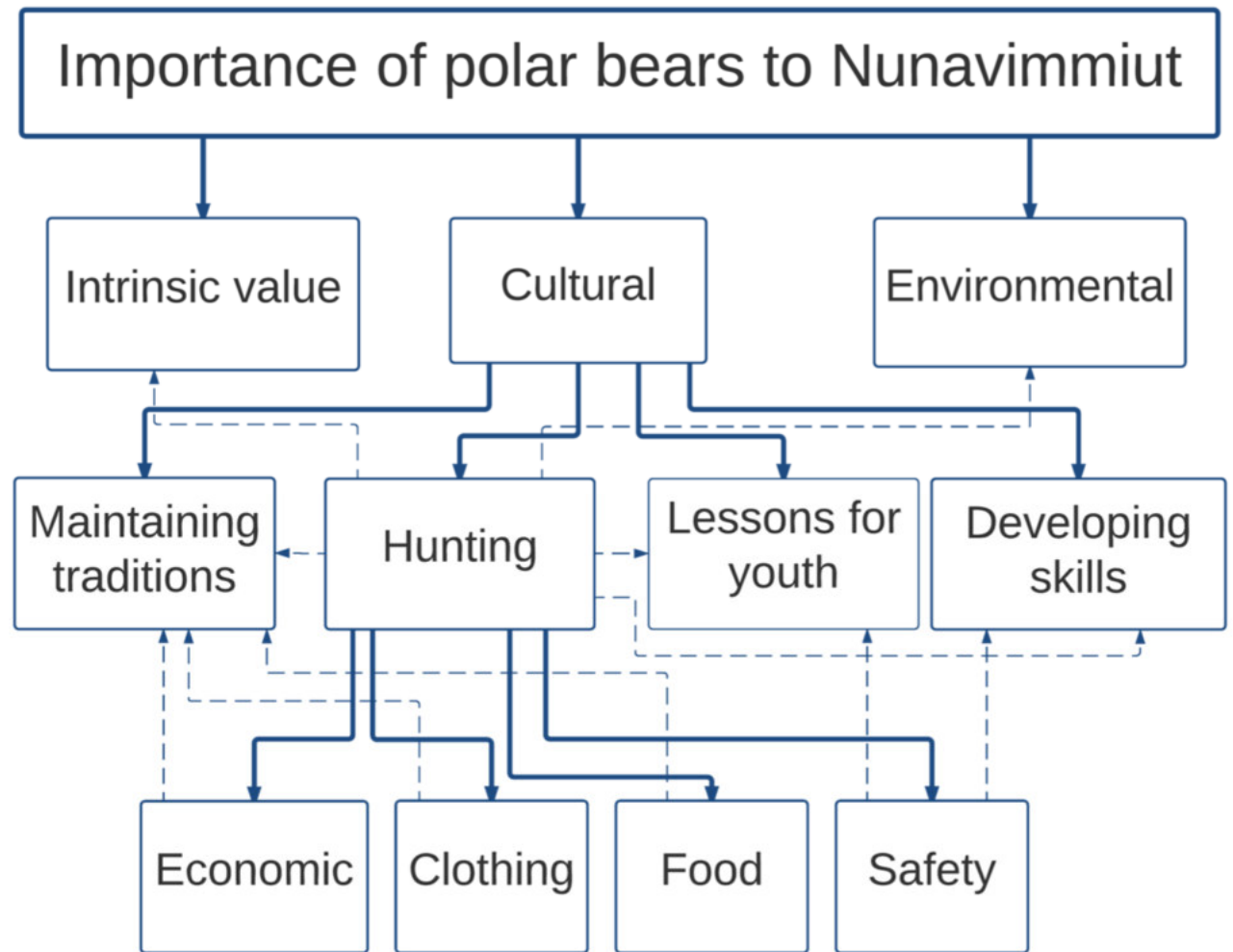
- Complex relationship
  - Reverence
  - Fear
  - Kinship (“Our fellow seal hunters”)
  - Nuisance
  - Hunting – rite of passage

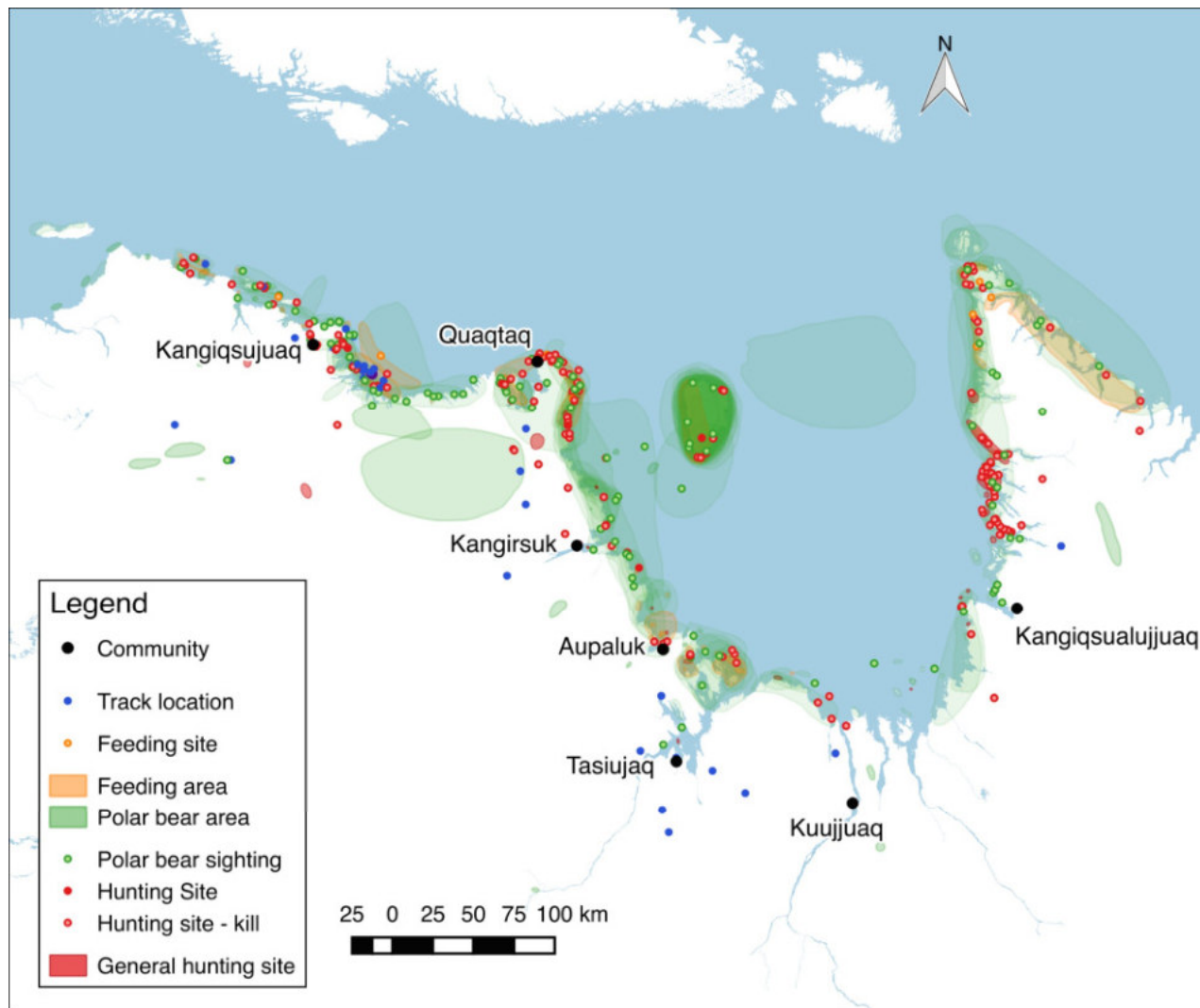


# Are Polar Bears Important to you? Why?

- By far the most common response:

Yes.  
Because they are  
dangerous





“We see more bears than ever before”

- More bears? Or Biased observations?
- Map does not appear to indicate spatial bias towards communities

Features reflecting Inuit Knowledge of the distribution of Davis Strait polar bears in Nunavik since 1990.

# Larger Scale Context – Other Areas in Canada

- Buy-in for management
  - Successful management decisions must represent the people who are most affected by them
- Currently the case
  - People feel that they must choose between their safety and protecting a resource that they feel is too abundant
  - Pressured to neglect their own safety
- Nunavik has had no polar bear related deaths in many years

# Quotas, DLP kills, and human welfare vs. conservation

## Polar Bear Science / Management

1. Science predicts declines (due to sea ice loss)
2. Increased human conflict with bears due to nutritional stress
3. Quotas put in place
4. Defense of Life and property kills are counted against quotas

## Inuit Reality

1. Seeing more bears than ever before
2. Polar bear safety is more of a concern than ever before
3. Limits placed on use of resource (cultural, economic, food)
4. The DLP Choice
  - Kill bear and “Steal” from quota
  - Allow bear to live (in context of 2)



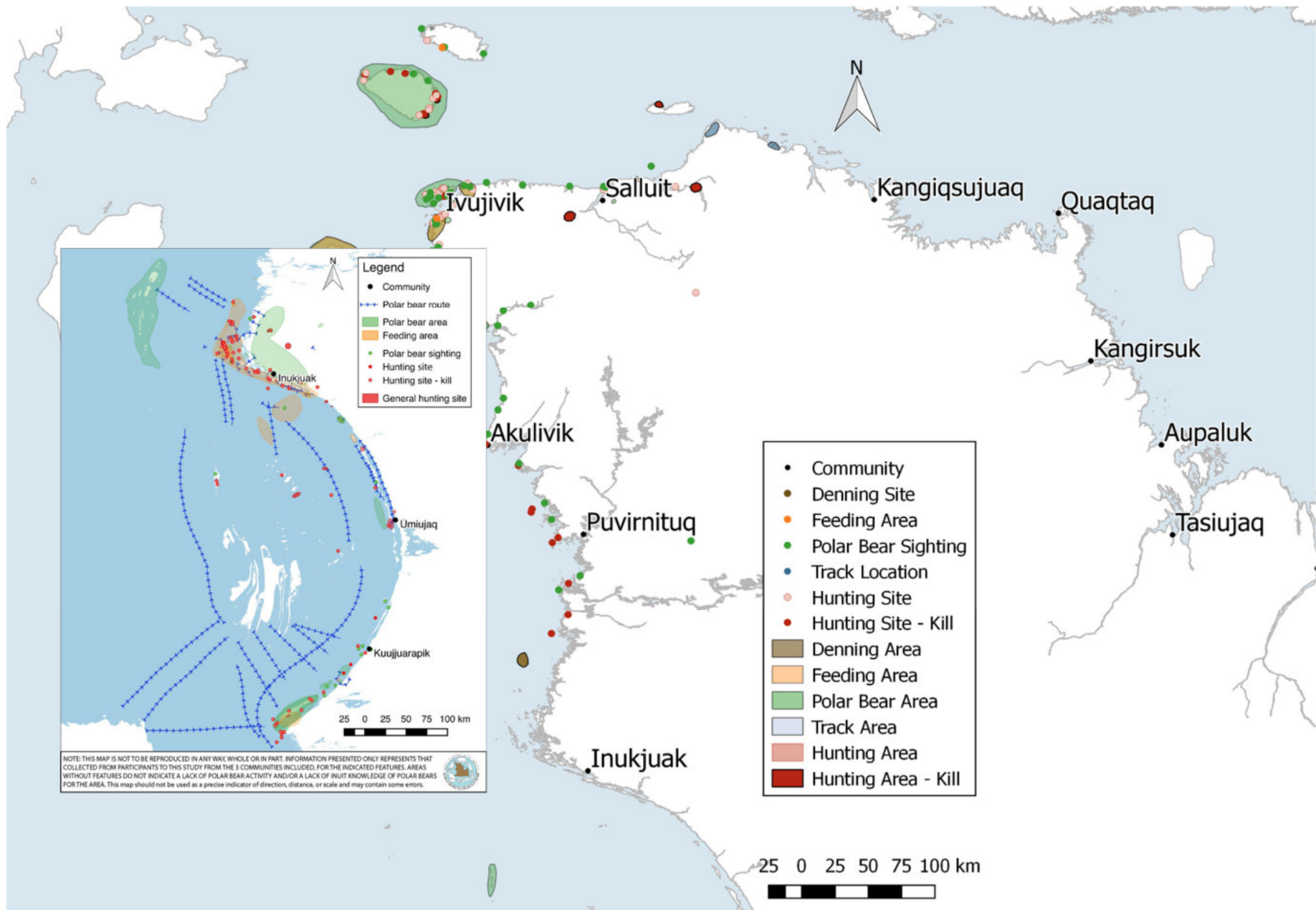
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Thank you  
Merci



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# Questions

- Are bears more abundant or less?
  - (insert map from DS IK study)
- Why can't a DLP kill also be resource use?
  - Sometimes it can
  - Most times: unprepared, wrong season, possible to kill but impossible to harvest