

Ikajutit Hunters and Trappers Association
PO Box 39, Arctic Bay, NU X0A 0A0
Tel: 867-439-8483; Fax: 867-439-8916

Re: Support for Killer Whale Research in Admiralty Inlet during summer 2026

In 2009, Fisheries and Oceans Canada initiated a killer whale field program in Admiralty Inlet based at Kakiak Point. We continued that research in collaboration with the Ikajutit HTA in 2010, 2015, 2017, and 2023, and we would like to come back to your community in 2026 to continue this long-term killer whale research. Previously, we have conducted satellite tagging, biopsy, and photography of killer whales during our field work, but in 2026, we would like to focus on studying killer whale behavior using drones and hydrophones from boats to better understand their interactions with narwhals.

Photography – killer whales will be photographed from boats. Killer whales can be identified by scars and body markings, and photographs collected in 2023 will be added to DFO's growing photo database of killer whales in the area since 2009. These photographs will be used to estimate killer whale abundance.

Biopsy – skin and blubber biopsies will be collected from killer whales using an air gun. Biopsies will be analyzed to understand killer whale diet and genetics, which will help determine their population structure and how they are related to other killer whales in the North Atlantic.

Satellite tagging – satellite tags will be deployed using a crossbow, as has been done previously for this project. Satellite tags are used to understand killer whale movements and distribution.

Drones (new) – drones will be flown from a research boat or from the shore to record killer whale behavior. DFO researchers would like to train one or two local research assistants on drone operation. This will allow greater community participation in future DFO research projects.


Hydrophones (new) – hydrophones will be used to record killer whale sounds (and other whales) by lowering the hydrophone **from the side of the boat**. Killer whale sounds will be matched with behaviors from drone recordings to understand how their calls differ depending on their behavior (e.g., hunting, travelling). **If the community/HTA approves**, DFO would also like to deploy **bottom-mounted hydrophones** using anchors at several sites in Admiralty Inlet. These would record whale calls (and other sounds such as shipping traffic) over the summer, and be collected before ice formation.

We require community approval to apply for permits and funding to conduct this killer whale research. If the HTA Board meets over the next month and can discuss our proposed research, it would be great if you could complete the questions below indicating whether you support our use of drone and hydrophones from boats (1), as well as bottom-mounted hydrophones on the seafloor (2).

1. The Ikajutit HTA supports the proposed killer whale research for 2026 (see separate decision on bottom-mounted hydrophones below).



Signature



Date

2. The Ikajutit HTA supports the use of bottom-mounted hydrophones for killer whale research in 2026.

Signature

Date

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

