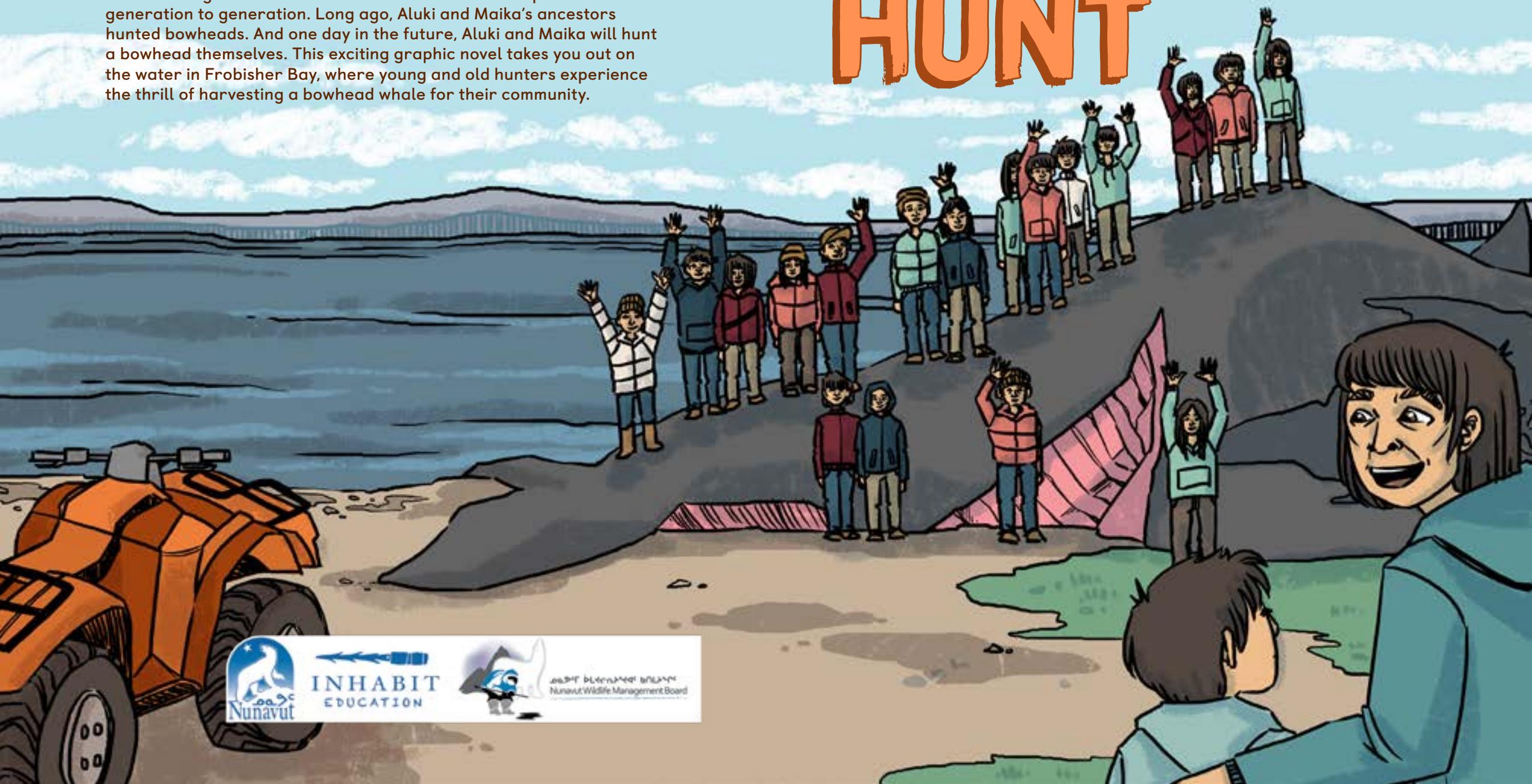


Aluki dreams of being a great hunter and catching a bowhead whale like Inuit did long ago. Whale hunting was part of Inuit life for centuries, but today is the first hunt to happen in Aluki's lifetime. He and his sister Maika can't wait to be part of the celebration when the hunters return with their catch. It's almost as fun as being on the hunt when everyone works together to haul the whale ashore and butcher it.

The knowledge and skills to hunt bowhead whales are passed from generation to generation. Long ago, Aluki and Maika's ancestors hunted bowheads. And one day in the future, Aluki and Maika will hunt a bowhead themselves. This exciting graphic novel takes you out on the water in Frobisher Bay, where young and old hunters experience the thrill of harvesting a bowhead whale for their community.

THE BOWHEAD HUNT



INHABIT
EDUCATION



NWT DEPARTMENT OF NUNAVUT
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

Published in Canada by Inhabit Education
www.inhabiteducation.com

Design and layout copyright © 2020 by Government of Nunavut
Text copyright © 2020 by Government of Nunavut
Illustrations copyright © 2020 by Government of Nunavut

All rights reserved. The use of any part of this publication reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or stored in a retrievable system, without written consent of the publisher, is an infringement of copyright law.

Printed and bound in Canada
ISBN 978-0-2287-0615-1

CONTRIBUTORS

Aviaq Johnston is a young Inuk author from Igloolik, Nunavut. Her debut novel *Those Who Run in the Sky* was released in the spring of 2017. In 2014, she won first place in the Aboriginal Arts and Stories competition for her short story "Tarnikuluk," which also earned her a Governor General's History Award. Aviaq is a graduate of Nunavut Sivuniksavut, and she has a diploma in Social Service Work from Canadore College. Aviaq loves to travel and has lived in Australia and Vietnam. She spends most of her time reading, writing, studying, and procrastinating. She is currently living in Iqaluit.

Koovian Flanagan was a harpooner on the bowhead hunt in Iqaluit in 2018. It was her first hunt. Her sister, Mary, was also a harpooner on the hunt. Koovian generously shared her first-hand account of the bowhead hunt to help create this graphic novel. Koovian and Mary are both from Iqaluit.

Solomon Awa was born in a sod house near Iglulik on November 2, 1959. From a young age, he was curious about everything around him. He is a talented carver, hunter, and storyteller. He teaches traditional knowledge at Nunavut Arctic College and works for Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiiit.



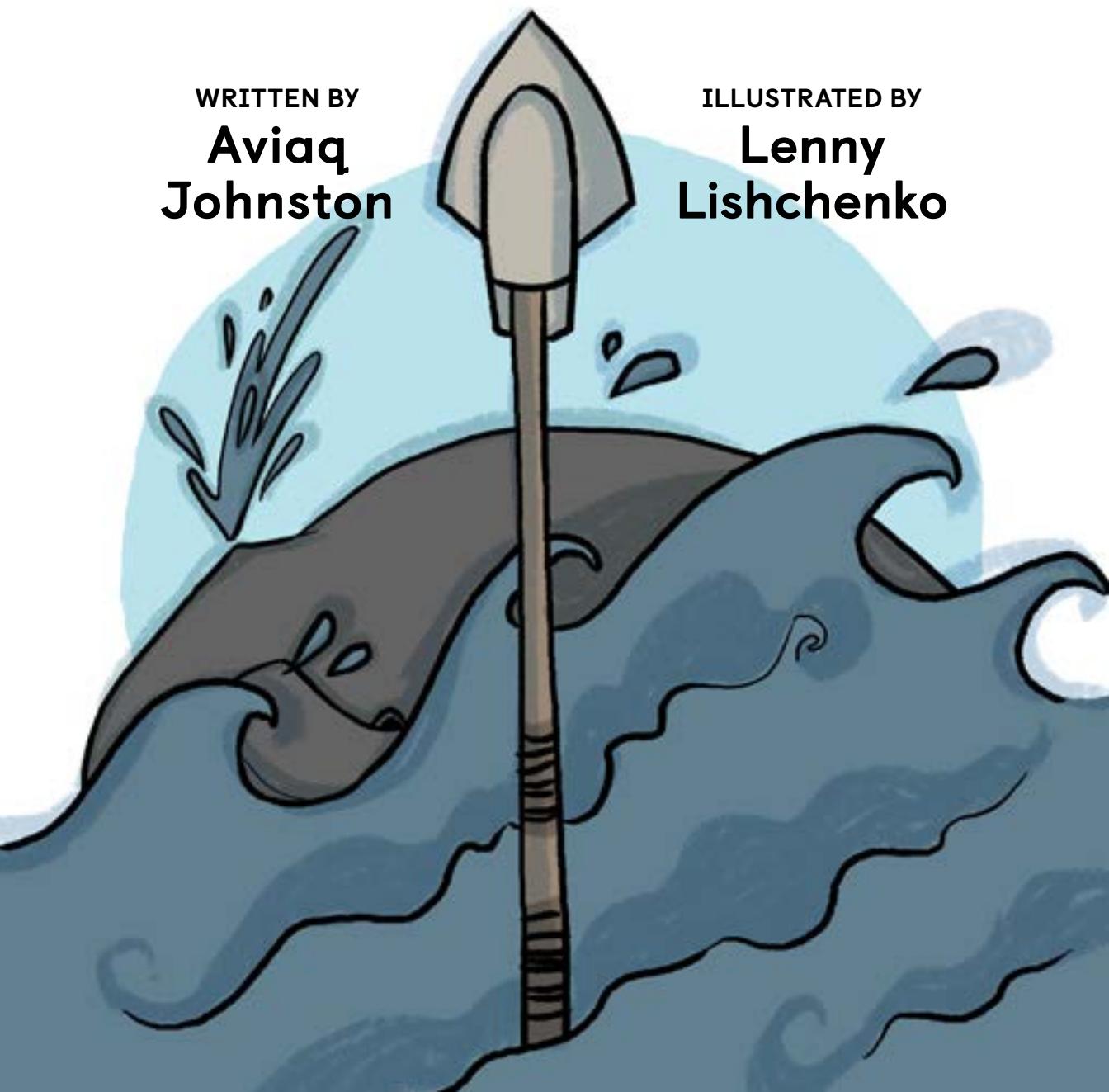
THE BOWHEAD HUNT

WRITTEN BY

**Aviaq
Johnston**

ILLUSTRATED BY

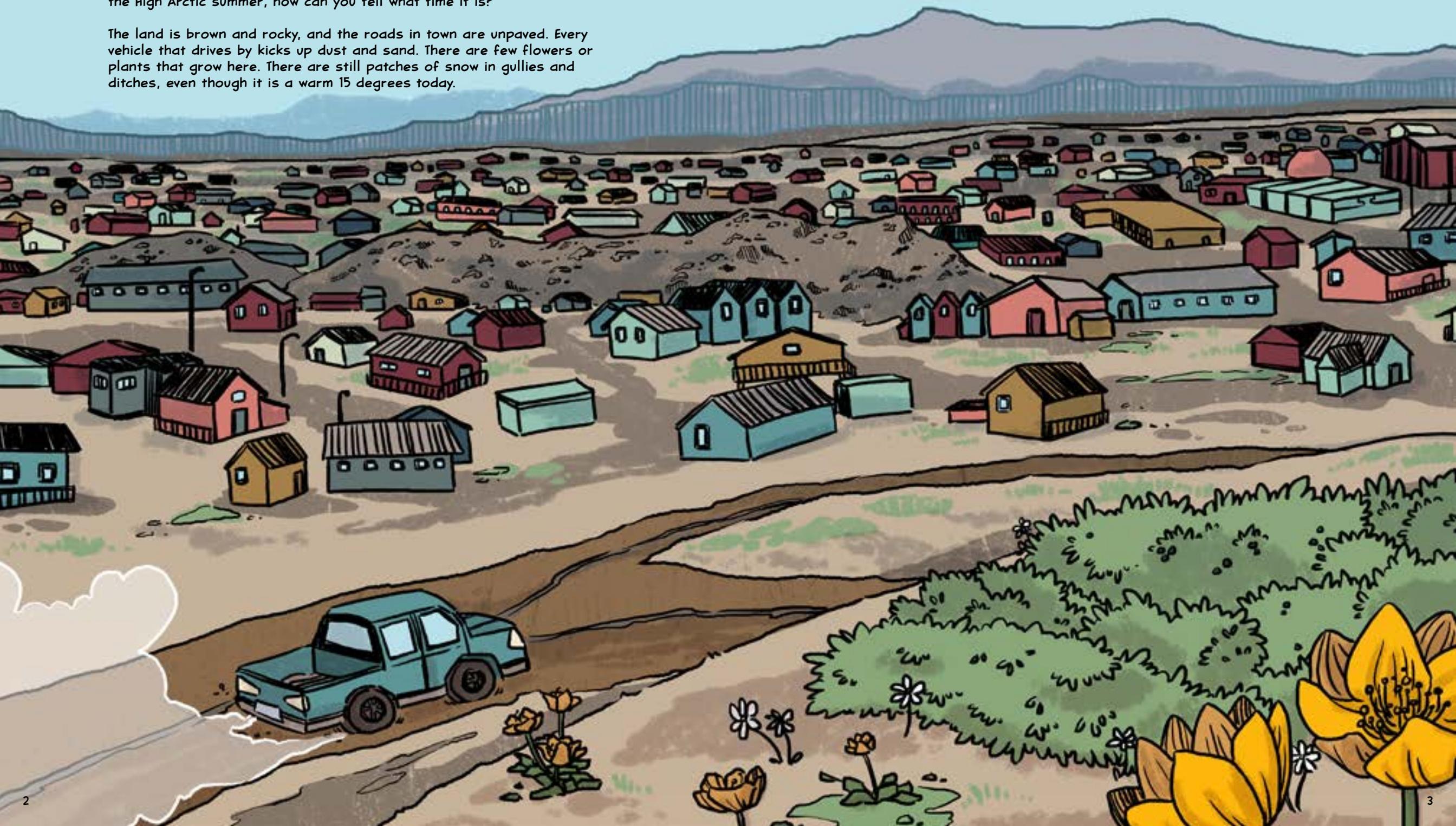
**Lenny
Lishchenko**



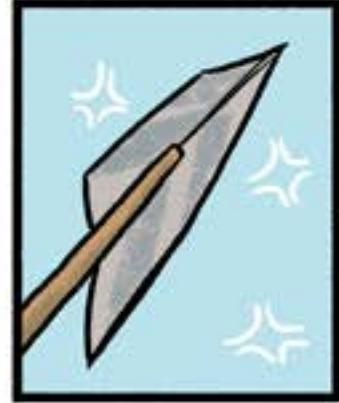
Nunavut, 2011.

The sun is high in the sky. It looks like it might be mid-afternoon, but in the High Arctic summer, how can you tell what time it is?

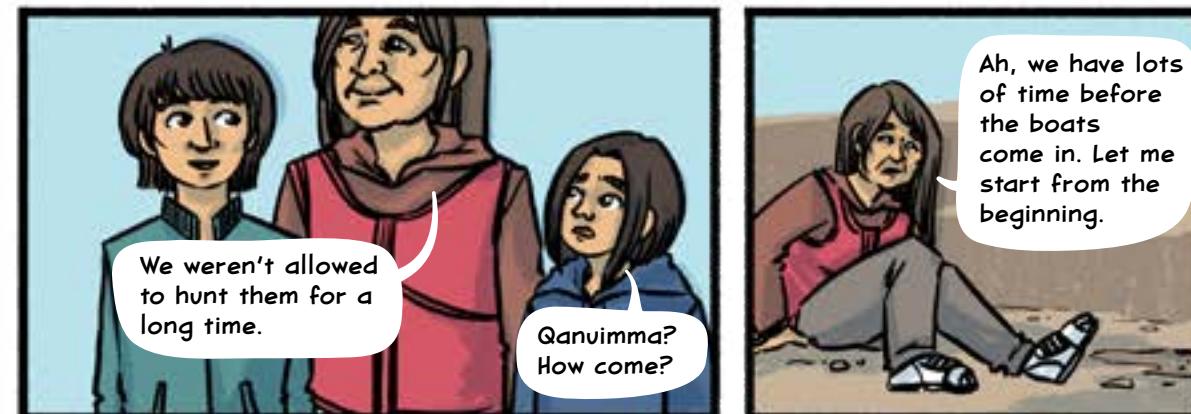
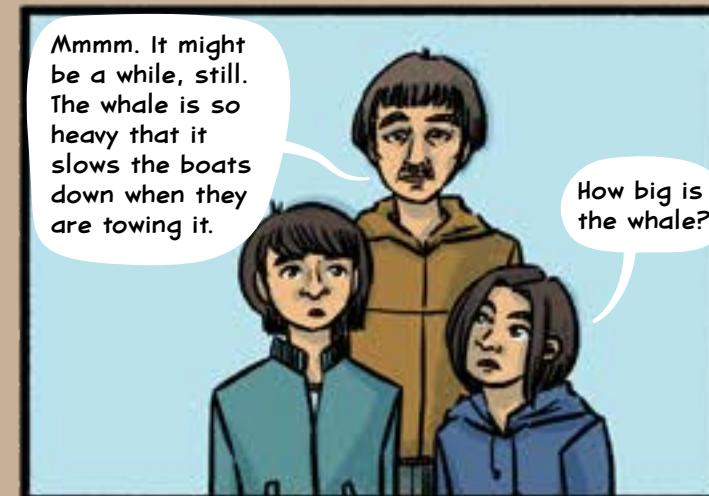
The land is brown and rocky, and the roads in town are unpaved. Every vehicle that drives by kicks up dust and sand. There are few flowers or plants that grow here. There are still patches of snow in gullies and ditches, even though it is a warm 15 degrees today.



The hunter raises his harpoon...







Invit have always used the land and animals to help us live our lives. We used to respectfully hunt bowhead whales because they were able to provide so much for our communities.

One bowhead could feed a camp for a year if they properly prepared and cached the food. The meat fed our dogs, too.



Uqsuq, the blubber, was the best for our qulliit, our stone lamps. Its oil was the cleanest to use. The inside of the iglu would stay much cleaner than if we used seal blubber.



The jaw bones were sometimes used for qamutiik runners, and the rib bones were used for our qarmaq or tent frames.





So how come we weren't allowed to hunt them for a long time?

A long time ago, whalers from Europe and America came here to hunt bowhead whales...

They wanted the oil and baleen. The oil was used for lamps, but it was also used to make perfume and make-up. The baleen was used for many things, like clothing and umbrellas.



But the whalers overhunted. Over time, the population decreased. Then the whalers left.

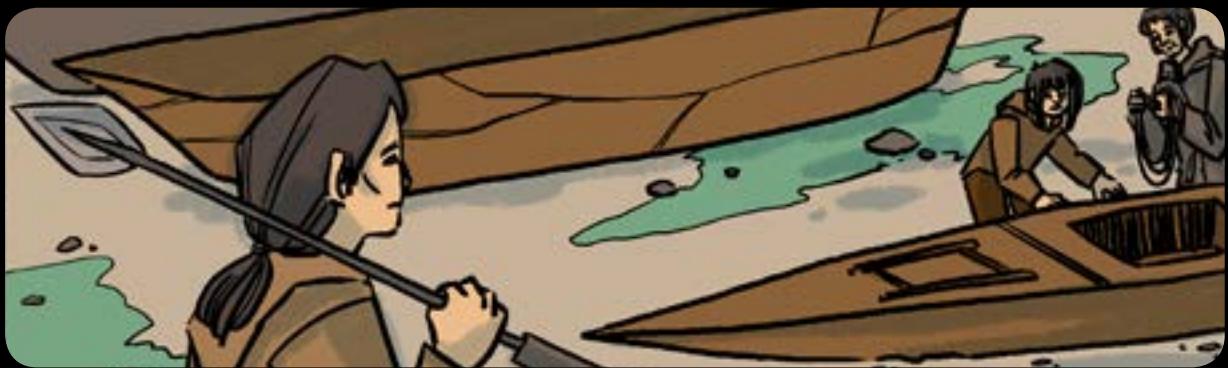


By then, it was very rare that we would see bowheads in our waters anymore. The Canadian government limited the harvesting of bowhead whales in 1979. In time, the population returned to a healthy size.





We did have sealskin umiat that could hold a small group of men, but the main harpooners on a bowhead hunt were usually in a qajaq.



The harpooner would get very close to the whale and aim for its heart, between the neck and the upper back. Once the harpooner made the strike, they paddled the qajaq away as fast as they could. The thrashing whale could capsize their boat.



The harpoon would be attached to an avataq, a buoy made from sealskin. The buoy was tethered to a short rope so it wouldn't tangle with the whale's tail. The avataq would float above the water, so you could see which direction the whale was swimming in, even if it was deep underwater. Sometimes the whale would dive so deep that it would carry the rope and the avataq down below. In that case, we would watch closely to see where the avataq would come above the surface again.



A niutaq was used to slow the whale down. A niutaq was almost like a sealskin drum that was attached to the line of the harpoon. It would drag in the water and make it difficult for the whale to swim quickly. This made it easier for the hunters because they could get close to the whale and penetrate its thick skin with their lances.

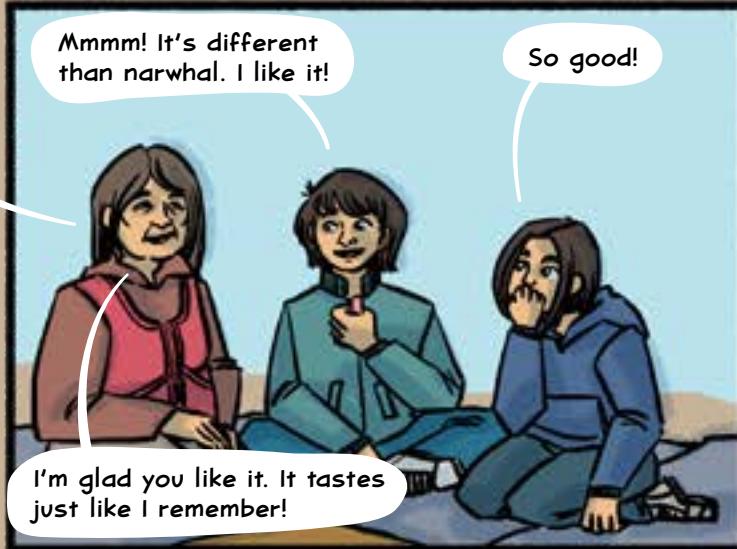
After being harpooned, the whale always dove very deep. The hunters had to track it very well so that when it surfaced again, they'd be able to use lances to strike it again. At these moments, they would try to pierce the whale's vital organs, like the lungs.



Once the whale was dead, the hunters would return to land. The whale was often too heavy to tow with their qajaq, so the hunters would wait for it to sink. Soon, the whale would bloat as its stomach filled up with gases. This would cause the whale to float and eventually end up on shore, where the hunters could harvest it.







Years later...



The next day...

