



Gift of the Whale
The Iñupiat Bowhead Hunt, A Sacred Tradition
A Special Multimedia Presentation
By Bill Hess, Running Dog Publications

For eleven years, 1985 - 1996, Bill Hess single-handedly produced Uirñiq, a quarterly photo magazine covering life in Alaska's North Slope Borough. The Borough covers an area nearly the size of the state of Utah and has a permanent population of about 5,500 people, most of them Iñupiat Eskimo. Hess flew his small airplane, the Running Dog, all about the Borough, and to other locations across Alaska and into Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories. He also made trips to Greenland and the Russian Far East gathering photos and stories.

Prior to beginning the magazine in 1985, Hess worked for three-and-a-half years as a roving reporter, photographer, and editor for the Tundra Times, a statewide newspaper covering Alaska Native issues. Before coming to Alaska in 1981, Hess spent six years living on the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona where his Native wife and the mother of his five children originated. There, he produced a newspaper for the tribe and did freelance work. Hess continues to document life in Alaska and the Arctic through Village Voices, a quarterly publication funded by the Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP) and other projects that come along.



Among the other projects that he is doing is a project documenting the stories of Alaska Native Veterans of the US Armed Forces, through interviews and portraits. It is sponsored by the Alaska Federation of Natives.

Hess's book, Gift of the Whale: The Iñupiat Bowhead Hunt - A Spiritual Tradition, was published in Fall 1999.