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DNA Testing Confirms Hybrid Bear Shot Near Ulukhaktok

YELLOWKNIFE (April 30, 2010) – DNA testing has confirmed that a bear shot near Ulukhaktok last month is a hybrid bear, but not a first generation polar/grizzly bear hybrid.

David Kuptana, an Inuvialuit hunter, shot the animal on April 8th 2010 on the sea ice just west of the community. The animal appeared unusual to the hunter and he provided samples from the bear to Environment and Natural Resources officials for testing to determine the species.

A wildlife genetics laboratory has since conducted DNA testing on the samples, and the results of the testing point to the animal being a second generation hybrid bear which resulted from the mating of a polar/grizzly bear female with a male grizzly bear. This confirms the existence of at least one female polar/grizzly bear hybrid near Banks Island. A male polar/grizzly bear hybrid had previously been shot on Banks Island in April 2006.

The testing compared the samples with DNA from polar bears in the area and DNA from grizzly bears along the coast south of the area. The DNA from the recently harvested bear was also compared with DNA previously collected from the confirmed hybrid bear harvested in 2006.

This may be the first recorded second generation polar/grizzly bear hybrid found in the wild.

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