



# KALI: A Polar Bear's Tale

AUTHOR: CAROLYN MUELLER | ILLUSTRATOR: JEREMY PATTON & JAYNE BALLEW

## Chapter Two:

It was a cold day. The month of March offers no promise of budding trees or sprouting daffodils when you live high above the Arctic Circle. Not many people make their home there, but James had grown up in those parts and was used to the weather. Snow blanketed the ground, but the thin light of early spring allowed James better visibility to look for caribou and wolverine, anything he could hunt and bring back to his village.

James had been a hunter for most of his life. The Inupiat people of Point Lay, Alaska, on the coast of the Chukchi Sea, rely on skilled subsistence hunters like James and others. Alaska Native

People along the northwest coast of Alaska hunt marine mammals, birds, fish and other land animals to keep their families healthy. Commercial food, which can be purchased for a few dollars in the lower 48 states, is very expensive there: noodles can cost \$13, and red or green peppers as much as \$10 each. What the meat hunters bring back is vitally important to the villagers' survival.

That day in March, James and his friend drove their snowmobiles 40 miles outside of Point Lay. He would have been happy to find any animal to bring back for his family and village, but a large animal, like a caribou, would be best. And that's when he saw the polar bear.

Being an Alaska native, James was legally allowed to hunt marine mammals like polar bears. Of course, it was rare for him to take a bear. In his lifetime as a hunter, this bear would only be his ninth.

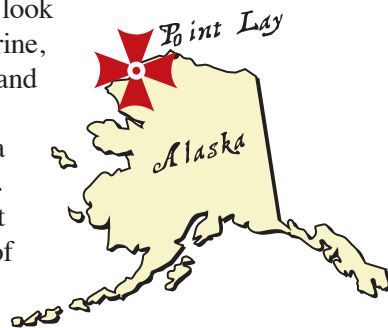
James did not take killing a polar bear lightly. These animals were respected and revered in Inupiat culture. But James was tasked with providing meat for his village, so he took what opportunities that luck and nature presented to him. He shot the bear.

When the bear was down, James approached it. Once certain that it was dead, he rolled it over. That's when he noticed something different. The other eight bears that James

had hunted had all been large, burly males with gigantic paws and teeth. This bear was a bit smaller, and on its stomach was a row of dark teats. This bear was a nursing sow. "Somewhere," he thought, "she has a cub."

James was crushed. He had not realized that the bear was a female, especially a nursing mother. "We've got to find the den," James said to his hunting companion. "There's a cub out here, and it won't survive for long without her."

The two men set out through the bitter wind and spring sunlight, until they saw the opening of a polar bear den.



## Ask Zoo Keeper Julie

### Where do mother polar bears sleep?

The mother bear excavates a small snow cave in a snowdrift just big enough for her to turn around in, and the snow will naturally close the entrance tunnel for her.

### How long do polar bears nurse?

Polar bear cubs will nurse for at least 20 months.

## Newspaper Connections

Check the local newspaper to find the time of sunrise and sunset and the average number of daylight hours for your town. Use the Internet to find a newspaper for Point Lay, Alaska to find the same information and compare. Collect this information over several months and graph the range of daylight hours for comparison.

