



Image: Jay Ruzesky, Unsplash.com.

Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) live in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas off the coasts of Alaska and Russia. They spend two-thirds of their life in the water and the rest on floating ice or land. They depend on sea ice as a platform for feeding and resting.

Walrus have many adaptations to survive in Arctic habitats. They have a thick layer of blubber (fat) under their skin to keep them warm and provide energy, and their skin is up to 4 inches (10 cm) thick to protect them from injuries and predators. They also have 400 to 700 vibrissae (vibrissae), to feel their way over the ocean floor and find food. Vibrissae can detect objects as small as a tomato seed! Both male and female walrus have flippers to help them climb out of the water, make breathing holes in ice, and defend their territory.

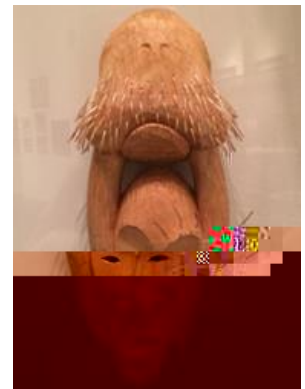
Walrus like to cuddle and to be touched! Walrus caretakers in aquariums will cuddle with walrus calves to help them survive. In Iñupiat and Yup'ik cultures, walrus are powerful and respected animals. The meat, blubber, skin, and organs provide a source of food. Hides are used for boat coverings, the stomach lining is used for drums, and ivory tusks are carved and engraved. Artists make many kinds of walrus masks and other artworks, reflecting the importance of walrus in these cultural traditions.



Walrus Mask by Bernard Tuglamena
Katexac. UA68-007-0002.



Detail from *Untitled* by George Ahgupuk.
UA1981-3-50.



Walrus Mask by Larry Ahvakana.
UA1984-003-032.