

## **Proposed Darnley Bay Area of Interest for a Marine Protected Area**

Darnley Bay, near Paulatuk, NWT, is a highly productive area for a variety of species. It provides important habitat for arctic char, beluga whales, polar bears, ringed seals and a variety of birds. In fact, it is home to the only thick billed murre colony in the western Canadian Arctic. Many species use the bay for feeding such as char and beluga. This region is culturally important to the Inuvialuit people who use the area for subsistence fishing and hunting.

In order for an area to qualify as a Marine Protected Area (MPA) it must meet at least one of the five criteria under the *Oceans Act*. The Darnley Bay Area of Interest meets three of these criteria:

The conservation and protection of:

- a) **commercial and non-commercial fishery resources, including marine mammals, and their habitats;**
- c) **unique habitats;**
- d) **marine areas of high biodiversity or biological productivity;**

A Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Darnley Bay would conserve and protect the marine organisms that utilize the area and ensure healthy populations of those organisms. By protecting the marine life, an MPA in the area would also help preserve the culture and subsistence economy of the Inuvialuit people.

The creation of a MPA is a collaborative effort. The Darnley Bay Area of Interest Steering Committee is comprised of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Fisheries Joint Management Committee, the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Paulatuk Hunters and Trappers Committee and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Together the committee will work towards the designation of the Darnley Bay MPA.

The establishment of this proposed MPA is being funded through the Health of the Oceans Initiative. This initiative by the Government of Canada is one of the ways in which Canada is working towards its national and international commitments to protect and conserve our oceans.

