

## **Traduction      Capitaine Lévis Ross ESSIPIT**

**Lévis Ross** - The whales are asleep, are they on the water's surface? They surface, and rest there. Yes, they let themselves... Very slowly, sometimes they can navigate a little, very slowly. But most of the time they're on the surface and stay there. That's when you can approach them, touch them. The best stories are when I was young, alone with the whales, I touched them. I navigated with them, and those are good stories. But when I talk to others about them, there are all kinds of little anecdotes with the whales. Once with two blue whales, my boat was a bit bigger than this one. Two blue whales followed me, they'd been following for about 45 minutes. They came along and slowly lifted the boat. They leaned up under the boat and lifted it a bit. The passengers thought that we'd hit something, a rock or a pebble. But I said: "No, they're friendly, they..." Do they recognize you? Yes. The whales, yes. They get to a point where they know the boat, they know how the captain works. Because they're all animals and you have to give them your trust. If you trust them, they'll become part of you. Once we saw some fin whales, they're the second largest. They can measure up to 22 metres, and weigh 60 tons. Once we saw 7 or 8 of them jump right out of the water, like a salmon or a trout. It's a spectacle you only get to see once in a lifetime. Boats aren't allowed to approach a whale closer than 200 metres if they're alone. If there are several boats, then it's 400 metres. And it's... the regulations are very strict for approaching whales. Ah, they have all kinds of... they're like you and me, there's always something, they always have prints. A whale lifts its tail. The tail print. The tails are never the same. You've got the whales, the fin whales, they all have some specific something by which you can recognize them. When you hang around whales for a long time, the same whales, you baptize them yourself. You always recognize them. But a whale is quite easy to recognize. Except for the beluga, the whales here all sing underwater. Underwater? Yes. We call the beluga the canary of the seas because the beluga is the only whale that sings on

the surface. It can whistle, grumble, meow, it can whistle, it can make a noise like a fart. It's always the same. The whales here, 80% of the whales that come here, return every year. 80%. There are always 20% of newcomers. What do you call your whales? What names do you give them? It depends. When we saw one that we felt was old, an old whale, we called it Mathusalem. Another, beautiful one, we called Beauty. Other names, like Moon. Nicknames like that. The love of whales. I started talking about whales, because people, I lived on the riverbank. People shot at the whales with rifles. Big rifles, just for fun. They would shoot. That won't kill a whale. A whale has almost a metre of fat on its back, on the body under its skin. And others harpooned them for fun. They would harpoon them with a 1,000-foot cable attached to a 45-gallon barrel of water, they'd harpoon them and let that go. The whale would die after 24 hours. It pulled that weight and it was exhausted, and it sunk down to the bottom and died there. That's what started it for me. I said: "We'll make them known, it will stop, this massacre will stop." It stopped. I went to school in Montreal, and I talked about whales. I was 15 or 16 years old, at that time. And no, people didn't believe it, no. They said: "Come on, the Montagnais is telling lies. A pack of lies."

**Music** - Philippe Mckenzie