



Beluga mother and calf in the Churchill River estuary, Manitoba

## Summary

**Oceans** are our planet's life support system, providing vital services that we all enjoy. Oceans provide a home to more than a million species, food, and a means of transport for countless more. Even if you do not live close to a shoreline, it affects your quality of life. Oceanic phytoplankton and aquatic plants produce at least half of the world's oxygen, providing a vital service to life across the entire world. Ocean currents help regulate the climate, keeping the earth at a habitable temperature. Additionally, the ocean stores an estimated 50 times more carbon than the atmosphere, aiding in moderating the effects of climate change. The ocean provides humans with a means of transportation, recreation, goods, and services. For many cultures and communities, oceans are an intrinsic part of life; they are a source of economic, social, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Oceans need our care. Plastic and chemical pollution, unsustainable fishing practices, habitat destruction, and climate change are just a few of the issues threatening global ocean health. Here in Manitoba, we are directly connected to the ocean through the lakes and rivers that drain into Hudson Bay. We are all supported by the ocean, regardless of how near or far we live from its shores, and so we are all responsible for ensuring that we keep our waterways and oceans healthy.

### KEY TERMS

- **Ocean Literacy** - An understanding of the ocean's influence on you and your influence on the ocean.
- **Microplastics** - Microplastics are tiny plastic particles (less than five millimetres) that result from both commercial product development and the breakdown of larger plastics. As a pollutant, microplastics can be harmful to environmental and wildlife health.
- **Sustainable Fishing** - Fishing practices which do not lead to long-term declines in fish populations. This includes harvesting practices that preserve healthy, long-term fish populations and limit negative effects to non-target species, habitats, and ecosystems.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What type of relationship do you have with water, is it a healthy relationship?**
2. **What barriers might prevent someone from accessing clean water?**
3. **Knowing that our actions here affect the ocean, are there changes you can make or advocate for to protect the ocean?**

### SUGGESTED RESEARCH PROJECT

Think about the water in the taps of your home or your school. Trace the path it has taken to reach your tap and the one it will take to reach the ocean. Find another community in Canada, trace the journey their water takes and compare them. What might these water resources encounter along the way? What do their journeys have in common and where do they differ?

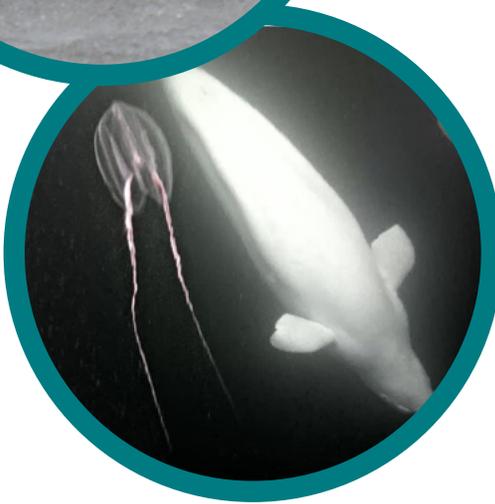




Beluga whale



Horned grebe



Arctic comb jellyfish near a beluga whale



### ACTION STEP

Visit a body of water and make a positive impact. This may mean picking up litter, reporting pollution, or contacting a community leader about your concerns.



### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Ocean Wise | Learn Online](#) - Educational resources and toolkits focused on ocean health and literacy

[UNESCO | Ocean Literacy Toolkit for All](#) - Educational resource and toolkit focused on ocean health and literacy

[Ocean Health Index](#) - Ocean health assessment

[Government of Manitoba | Watershed, Aquifer, and Basin Planning](#) - Information and maps of drainage basins in Manitoba