

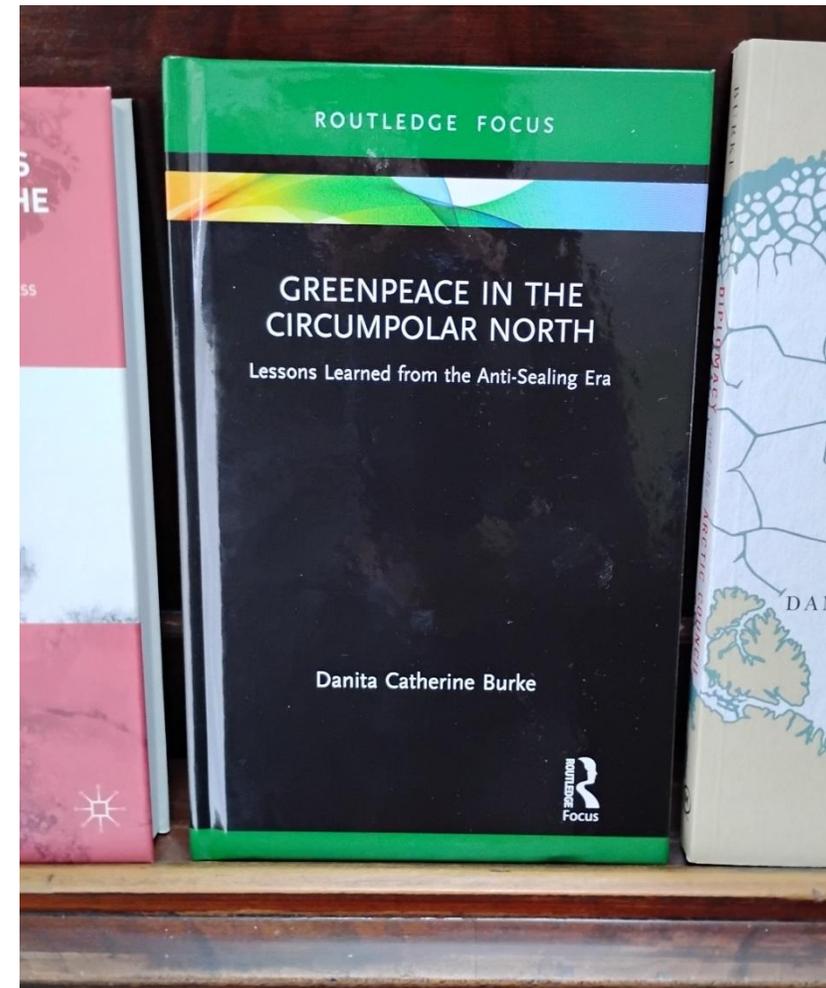
Greenpeace in the Circumpolar North: Lessons Learned from the Anti-Sealing Era

IASH Northern Scholars Visiting Research Fellows Presentation

Dr. Danita Catherine Burke

Senior Research Fellow of the Center for War Studies,
University of Southern Denmark / Northern Scholars
Visiting Research Fellow, IASH University of
Edinburgh (2023-2025)

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DISCLAIMER:

This presentation touches on subjects that are sensitive to some people, such as hunting, cultural violence and political/social activism.

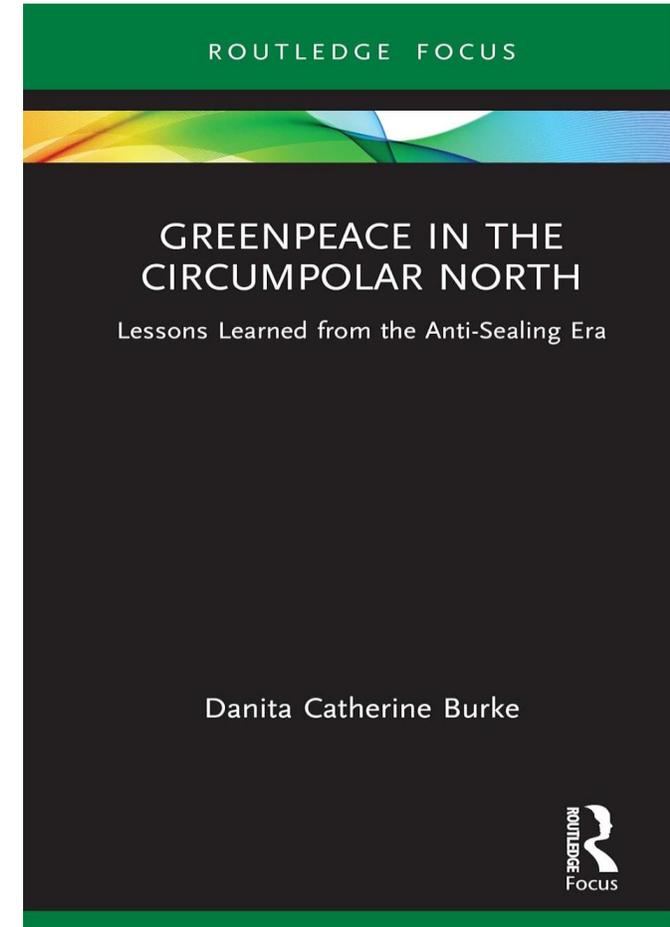
Photo: Stop sign in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada / Copyright: Danita Catherine Burke, 2018

Overview



Photo taken by D.C. Burke – IASH, Edinburgh October 2022

- Background
- Greenpeace and anti-sealing activism – A Brief Introduction
- Why Greenpeace’s anti-sealing legacy still matters
- Examples explored
- Related work that might be of interest



Background

- Reflects research across various projects:
 - Interviews about Arctic work, anti-sealing legacy and building relationships with local actors - Marie Skłodowska-Curie (2018-2020)
 - Archival research on the Newfoundland and Labrador experience with anti-sealing activism – J.R. Smallwood fellowship (2020-2022)
 - Extended due to impact of Covid on completion
 - Northern Scholars Visiting Research Fellow (2022-2023;2025), Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH), University of Edinburgh
 - Accommodation for impact of illness
 - Archival research predominately on Indigenous experiences with anti-sealing and anti-fur activism – Joan Mitchell Travel Award, Wilfrid Laurier University (2025)
 - Awarded in 2023; delayed to 2025 due to illness
 - Research into the Circumpolar North legacy of anti-sealing activism, sealing traditions and impact of EU seal product bans – Nordic Council in Greenland’s Nordic Arctic Programme (2025-Ongoing)

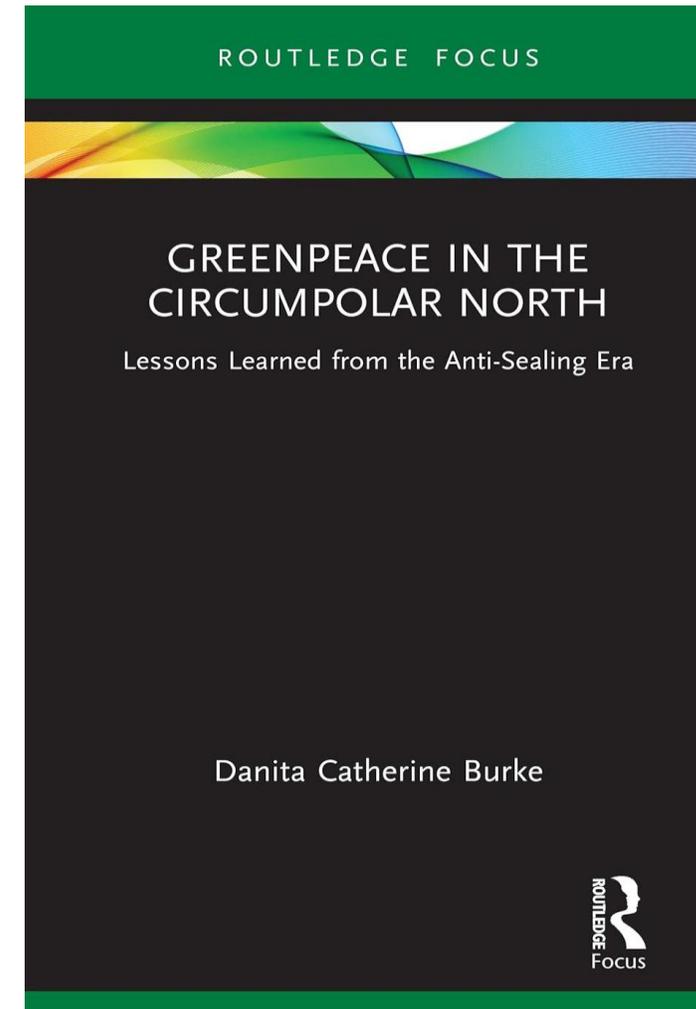


Photo taken by D.C. Burke - Laurier Archives, March 2025



Greenpeace and anti-sealing activism – A Brief Introduction

- Instances of reported violence during direct action work in the 1977 hunt (Roswell, 1977).
- Knowledge of target vulnerability: a Greenpeace report from 1977 shows the organisation was aware the people participating in the seal fishery had an average “3.5 dependents, an average education of grade 9, [and were] living in isolated communities with limited occupational mobility” (Greenpeace Foundation 1977, 2).
- It technically stopped its anti-sealing work in 1986 at the urging of Indigenous peoples and WWF (Woods, 1986).



- Greenpeace claims its work is rooted in the non-violence philosophy
- Greenpeace’s code of conduct articulates:
 - “we encourage people to develop and empower them to take risks and learn from their mistakes”
 - Develop “mutual trust through transparency and accountability in our interactions” (Greenpeace International 2018, 3).
- Greenpeace Canada apologized in 2014 to Inuit/Indigenous peoples of Canada and coastal peoples for harm from its anti-sealing activism.
 - “Like the corporations we campaign against, we too must be open to change. Open to examining ourselves, our history, and the impact our campaigns have had, and to constantly reassessing ourselves — not just by apologizing, but by humbly making amends and changing the way we work. And we have a responsibility — not just as an organization that once campaigned against the commercial hunt, but also as conscious, socially responsible human beings — to right wrongs, to actively stop the spread of misinformation, and to decolonize our thinking, our language and our approach” (Kerr, 2014).

Why Greenpeace’s anti-sealing legacy still matters

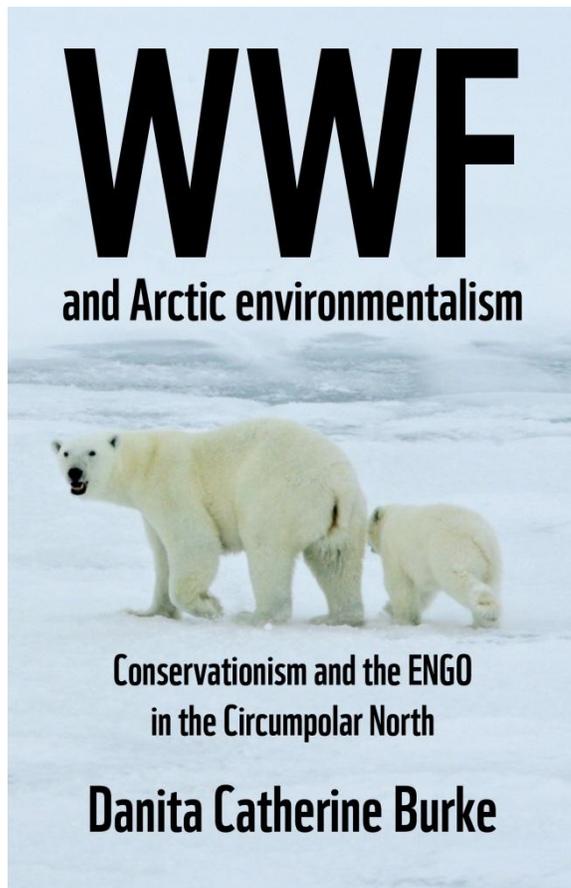
Examples explored



Photo taken by D.C. Burke 2013, Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland

- Traditional Lands and Reindeer Herders: Sámi, Finland
- Seismic Testing and Inuit Rights: Kangiqtugaapik/Clyde River, Nunavut, Canada
- Protesting Oil Exploration and Working to Protect a Sacred Area: Arctic 30 and the Nenet and Khanty of Numto, Russia

Related work that might be of interest



Re-establishing legitimacy after stigmatization: Greenpeace in the North American North

Danita Catherine Burke 

Center for War Studies and Department of Political Science and Public Management, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

Abstract

International environmental non-governmental organizations (IENGOS) have a long and checkered history of involvement and impact in, and on, the North. Using the example of Greenpeace, arguably one of the most stigmatized IENGOS in the North American North, this paper explores the questions: why are IENGOS stigmatized in the North American North and how might they overcome their stigma with local audiences? It outlines the role of moral legitimacy in stigmatization and overcoming stigma, and the challenges of (re)establishing moral legitimacy with a stigmatizing audience, in this case, Inuit in Northern Canada and Greenland.

Manchester University Press, 2022

Polar Record, 2020



Cultural Violence, Stigma and the Legacy of the Anti- Sealing Movement

DANITA CATHERINE BURKE



Routledge, 2023
(Some chapters are open access)



Photo taken by D.C. Burke – Greenpeace Netherlands office, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, September 11, 2018

• **References** (in addition to *Greenpeace in the Circumpolar North*)

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- Greenpeace International (2018). “Model Code of Conduct.” Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18BvOe-2hIuRAfNvKNX5nuOnxIPwzONKj/view> (Accessed 22 August 2020).
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- Roswell, H. (1977) “1977 Sealing Activities by Newfoundland Landsmen and Ships on the Front: A Report to the Committee on Seals and Sealing and The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies.” Memorial University of Newfoundland, Queen Elizabeth 2nd Library, Centre for Newfoundland Studies Stacks SH363.R69.
- Woods, S.J. (1986). “The Wolf at the door: The anti-harvest campaign strikes at the heart of north aboriginal economies.” *Northern Perspectives* 14(1): 1–8..

Thank you! Questions?

