

Preliminary Year 1 Report

Seals, Stigma and Survival

Finding Solutions to the EU Stigmatization of Seal Hunting

A Nordic Arctic Programme supported project

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Executive Summary

This report provides readers an overview of the project *Seals, Stigma and Survival: Finding Solutions to the EU Stigmatization of Seal Hunting*. This project received support primarily from the Nordic Council in Greenland's Nordic Arctic Programme, with additional support from Innovation South Greenland; the Joan Mitchell Travel Award; the Department Political Science and Public Management, University of Southern Denmark; and the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission/NAMMCO. The project explores the stigma associated with seal products, seal hunting and sealers in the EU with the aim to explore solutions for overcoming the stigma and support Indigenous and non-Indigenous rural and coastal communities and cultures impacted by the current status of the EU seal product ban. The project examines the question: How can the stigma on seal hunting and products in the EU be addressed?

Year 1 was undertaken from February 2025 to March 2026. Year 1 focused heavily on data collection with interviews and conversations conducted with people based in multiple countries (Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Canada, Estonia, France, and Belgium) from April to December 2025. Archival research was conducted in March 2025 at the Laurier Archives at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

Year 1 focused on engagement with various rightsholders and stakeholders, including hunter/sealers, civil servants and diplomats (current and retired), union/hunting associations, and researchers/scholars across disciplines including politics, anthropology, marine biology, parasitology, and law. The team prioritized the inclusion of hunter/sealer voices in acknowledgement of their subject matter expertise and first hand experiences with both seal hunting and the repercussions of the EU regulations against sealing and anti-sealing activism.

Year 1 coincided with the public availability of open access data from the European Commission on the 2024 EU public consultation as part of the fitness test review of its trade in seal products regulations. The final report from the EU/European Commission on the results of its public consultations and potential amendments to its regulations is delayed and was not available for full review and incorporation into Year 1 of the project. More information our preliminary review of the public engagement can be found in our discussion paper, "Acknowledging and Addressing the Absence of Greenlandic Public Input into the EU's 2024 Public Consultations on the Fitness of its Trade in Seal Products Regulations" and the "EU Trade in Seal Products Fitness Test Series" on our project website – www.survivingsealingstigma.com.

Naalisarnera

Una nalunaarusiaq suliniummut Seals, Stigma and Survival: Finding Solutions to the EU Stigmatization of Seal Hunting tunngatillugu takussutissiivoq. Suliniut pingaarnerpaamik aningaasaliiffiqineqarpoq Nordisk Ministerrådimit, Grønlands Nordisk Arktisk Program aqputigalugu, kiisalu tapersorneqarluni Innovation South Greenlandimit, Joan Mitchell Travel Awardimit, Syddansk Universitetimi Institut for Statskundskab og Offentlig Forvaltningimit aamma Den Nordatlantiske Havpattedyrkommissionimit (NAMMCO).

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Sammendrag

Denne rapporten gir en oversikt over prosjektet «Seals, Stigma and Survival: Finding Solutions to the EU Stigmatization of Seal Hunting» (Norsk oversettelse: «Seler, stigma og overlevelse: Å finne løsninger på EUs stigmatisering av selfangst»). Prosjektet er finansiert av Nordisk Råd gjennom Grønlands nordiske Arktis program, med tilleggsstøtte fra Innovation South Greenland, Joan Mitchell Travel Award, Institut for Statskundskab og Offentlig Forvaltning ved Syddansk Universitet, samt NAMMCO - North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission.

Prosjektet undersøker stigmaet knyttet til selprodukter, selfangst og selfangere i EU. Målet er å finne løsninger som gjør slutt på stigmatiseringen og å støtte både urfolks- og ikke-urfolks bygde- og kystsamfunn og kulturer som i dag blir påvirket av EUs forbud mot selprodukter. Det overordnede forskningsspørsmålet er: Hvordan kan stigma rundt selfangst og selprodukter i EU håndteres?

Det første året i prosjektarbeidet ble gjennomført fra februar 2025 til mars 2026, med hovedvekt på datainnsamling, med intervjuer og samtaler gjennomført med personer i flere land (Kalaallit Nunaat/Grønland, Sverige, Norge, Danmark, Finland, Canada, Estland, Frankrike og Belgia) fra april til desember 2025. I tillegg ble arkivforskning gjennomført i mars 2025 ved Laurier Archives ved Wilfrid Laurier University i Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

Under År 1 av prosjektet var hovedfokuset på dialog med forskjellige rettighetshavere og interessenter, inkludert jegere/selfangere, offentlig ansatte og både nåværende og tidligere diplomater, fagforeninger og jeger- og fangstorganisasjoner, samt forskere og akademikere på tvers av fagområder som statsvitenskap, antropologi, marinbiologi, parasittologi og juss. Prosjektgruppen prioriterte å inkludere stemmene til fangstfolk, i anerkjennelse av deres kunnskap og førstehåndserfaringer med både selfangst og konsekvensene av EUs reguleringer mot selfangst og anti-selfangst-aktivisme.

År 1 sammenfalt med at Europakommisjonen tilgjengeliggjorde åpne data om EUs offentlige høring fra 2024, som ledd i gjennomgangen av regelverket for handel med selprodukter. Sluttrapporten fra EU/Europakommisjonen om resultatene av de offentlige høringene og mulige endringer i regelverket er forsinket, og derfor var disse resultatene ikke tilgjengelige for full gjennomgang og integrering i År 1 av prosjektet. Mer informasjon om våre foreløpige vurderinger av den offentlige medvirkningen finnes i vårt diskusjonsnotat «Acknowledging and Addressing the Absence of Greenlandic Public Input into the EU's 2024 Public Consultations on the Fitness of its Trade in Seal Products Regulations» (Norsk oversettelse: «Erkjennelse og håndtering av fraværet av grønlandske innspill i EUs offentlige høringer i 2024 om hensikten med regelverket for handel med selprodukter») og i «EU Trade in Seal Products Fitness Test Series» på prosjektets nettside, se: www.survivingsealingstigma.com.

Sammandrag

Denna rapport ger en översikt av projektet *Seals, Stigma and Survival: Finding Solutions to the EU Stigmatization of Seal Hunting*. Projektet har främst finansierats av Nordiska rådet i Grönlands Nordiska Arktiska program. Ytterligare stöd har erhållits från Innovation South Greenland; Joan Mitchell Travel Award; Institutionen för statsvetenskap och offentlig förvaltning vid Syddansk Universitet, Danmark; samt från North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO).

Projektet undersöker den stigmatisering som omger sälprodukter, sälfångst och säljägare inom EU, med målsättningen att identifiera och utveckla lösningar för att övervinna denna stigmatisering samt att stödja ursprungsbefolkningar och icke-ursprungsbefolkningar i landsbygds- och kustsamhällen och deras kulturer som påverkas av den nuvarande

EU-regleringen av handel med sälprodukter. Projektet behandlar följande centrala frågeställning: **Hur kan stigmat mot sälfångst och sälprodukter inom EU behandlas?**

År 1 genomfördes mellan februari 2025 och mars 2026. Detta år fokuserade i hög grad på datainsamling; intervjuer och samtal genomfördes med personer verksamma i flera länder (Kalaallit Nunaat/Grönland, Sverige, Norge, Danmark, Finland, Kanada, Estland, Frankrike och Belgien) under perioden april–december 2025. Arkivforskning genomfördes i mars 2025 vid Laurier Archives vid Wilfrid Laurier University i Waterloo, Ontario, Kanada.

År 1 prioriterade dialog och engagemang med olika rättighetsinnehavare och intressenter, inklusive jägare/säljägare, tjänstemän och diplomater (nuvarande och pensionerade), fackföreningar/jaktföreningar samt forskare och akademiker från discipliner såsom statsvetenskap, antropologi, marinbiologi, parasitologi och juridik. Forskarteamet betonade särskilt inkludering av jägare/säljägare för att ge erkännande till deras sakkunskap och förstahandskunskap kring både sälfångst och de konsekvenser som EU-regleringarna och anti-sälaktivism har medfört.

År 1 sammanföll med offentliggörandet av öppendata från Europeiska kommissionen angående den offentliga konsultationen 2024 som ingår i fitness-testet för EU:s reglering av handel med sälprodukter. Kommissionens slutliga rapportering av resultaten för den offentliga konsultationen och eventuella föreslagna ändringar är fördröjd och fanns inte tillgänglig för full granskning och införlivande under första året av projektet. Mer information om vår preliminära granskning av den offentliga dialogen återfinns i vår diskussionsrapport ”Acknowledging and Addressing the Absence of Greenlandic Public Input into the EU’s 2024 Public Consultations on the Fitness of its Trade in Seal Products Regulations” samt i serien ”EU Trade in Seal Products Fitness Test Series” på projektets webbplats: www.survivingsealingstigma.com.

Yhteenveto

Tämä raportti tarjoaa yleiskatsauksen projektiin Seals, Stigma and Survival: Finding Solutions to the EU Stigmatization of Seal Hunting. Projekti on saanut pääasiallisen rahoituksensa Pohjoismaiden ministerineuvoston Grönlannin osaston Pohjoisen arktisesta ohjelmasta. Lisätukea on saatu seuraavilta tahoilta: Innovation South Greenland, Joan Mitchell Travel Award, Poliitiikan ja julkisen hallinnon laitos, University of Southern Denmark, sekä North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO).

Hanke tutkii EU:ssa esiintyvää leimautumista, joka kohdistuu hyljetuotteisiin, hylkeenmetsästyksen ja hylkeenpyytäjiin, ja pyrkii löytämään ratkaisuja tämän leimautumisen poistamiseksi sekä tukemaan alkuperäiskansoja ja ei-alkuperäiskansoja maaseutu- ja rannikkoyhteisöissä sekä niiden kulttuureissa, joita EU:n nykyinen hyljetuotteiden kauppakielto koskee. Hanke tarkastelee keskeistä tutkimuskysymystä: Miten EU-tasolla voitaisiin käsitellä ja vähentää leimautumista, joka kohdistuu hylkeenmetsästyksen ja hyljetuotteisiin?

Hankkeen 1. toteutusvuonna helmikuusta 2025 maaliskuuhun 2026. Vuoden painopiste oli laajassa aineistonkeruussa: haastatteluja ja keskusteluja toteutettiin ajalla huhtikuu–joulukuu 2025 henkilöiden kanssa useissa maissa (Kalaallit Nunaat/Grönlanti, Ruotsi, Norja, Tanska, Suomi, Kanada, Viro, Ranska ja Belgia). Arkistotutkimus tehtiin maaliskuussa 2025 Laurier Archivesissa /Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Kanada).

Tutkimuksen 1. vuosi painottui vuoropuheluun eri oikeudenhaltijoiden ja sidosryhmien kanssa, joihin kuului metsästäjiä/hylkeenpyytäjiä, virkamiehiä ja diplomaatteja (nykyisiä ja

eläkkeellä olevia), ammattiliittoja/metsästysyhdistyksiä sekä tutkijoita ja akateemikkoja eri tieteenaloilta kuten politiikka, antropologia, meribiologia, parasitologia ja oikeustiede. Tiimi korosti erityisesti metsästäjien/hylkeenpyytäjien äänen sisällyttämistä tunnustukseen heidän asiantuntemuksensa ja kokemuksensa sekä hylkeenpyyntiin että EU-sääntelyn ja hylkeenpyyntiä vastustavan aktivismin seurauksiin liittyen.

Tutkimuksen 1. vuosi ajoittui samaan aikaan Euroopan komission avoimen datan julkaisun kanssa, joka koski vuoden 2024 EU:n julkista kuulemistä osana sääntelyn fitness-testiä. Komission lopullinen raportti kuulemisen tuloksista ja mahdollisista sääntömuutoksista viivästyi eikä ollut käytettävissä 1. vuoden lopulliseen analyysiin. Lisätietoja hankkeen alustavasta tarkastelusta julkisesta osallistumisesta löytyy keskustelupaperistamme “Acknowledging and Addressing the Absence of Greenlandic Public Input into the EU’s 2024 Public Consultations on the Fitness of its Trade in Seal Products Regulations” sekä sarjasta “EU Trade in Seal Products Fitness Test Series” projektin verkkosivulla www.survivingsealingstigma.com.

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1. Introduction

Seal hunting is an integral part of traditional cultural and economic practices of many peoples throughout the Arctic and Circumpolar North (e.g. Burke, 2021a; 2021b; Farquhar, 2020; Hawkins and Silver, 2017; Dauvergne and Neville, 2011; Harter, 2004; Patey, 1990; Allen, 1979), but the practice of killing seals is stigmatized in the European Union (EU) after decades of anti-sealing environmental and animal rights activism. In light of the anti-sealing activism and substantial lobbying by the International Fund for Animal Welfare and its allies, the EU banned seal product imports in 2009 on the basis of a moral objection (European Commission, 2016; 2019a; 2019b). The decision to ban seal product imports on the basis of a moral objection impacts predominately rural and coastal working class Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the North American and European Arctic/Nordic regions, from the Northeast Coast of Newfoundland up to and including the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, Canada across to Greenland, Norway and Finland (European Commission, 2020) by shaming their existence and undermining their sustainable economic and cultural activities.

Seals, Stigma and Survival: Finding Solutions to the EU Stigmatization of Seal Hunting aims to explore solutions to the stigma associated with seal products, seal hunting and sealers in the EU, solutions for overcoming the stigma and avenues for opening debate about the current status of the EU seal product ban by examining the question: **How can the stigma on seal hunting and products in the EU be addressed?**

This project is important because underpinning the issues of sealing stigma in the EU are issues of colonial thinking, lack of activism accountability, cultural and economic violence and class politics which sealing communities throughout the Nordic region and the Circumpolar North more broadly continue to live with the repercussions (Burke, 2020; 2021a). The EU ban on seal products stems directly from the decades of anti-sealing activism by environmental and animal rights organisations (e.g. IFAW, n.d.; Kerr 2014), but as Greenpeace concedes, the movement was rife with misinformation and colonial thinking (Kerr 2014) which undoubtedly contributed to the moral objections that EU policy makers and citizens now have against sealing, seal products and sealers. This project, therefore, seeks to be part of the rebalancing of the narrative, to address the colonial injustices that the anti-sealing movement and its members inflicted on rural and coastal Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and peoples, and to help find solutions to the stigma sealers face today.

2. Core Team

i. Principal Investigator:

Dr. Danita Catherine Burke is a research fellow at the University of Southern Denmark and the founder of the Women in the Arctic and Antarctic. Burke is from rural Newfoundland. Her research areas cover topics such as cultural violence, anti-sealing activism, Arctic diplomacy, environmental activism legacies and Canadian identification with the North. She is the author of *Greenpeace in the Circumpolar North: Lessons Learned from the Anti-Sealing Era* (2025, Routledge) *Cultural Violence, Stigma and the Legacy of the Anti-Sealing Movement* (2023, Routledge), *WWF and Arctic environmentalism* (2022, Manchester University Press), “Re-

establishing Legitimacy after Stigmatization: Greenpeace in the North American North” (2020, Polar Record) and *Diplomacy and the Arctic Council* (2019, McGill-Queens University Press).

ii. Secondary Investigators (Year 1):

There are four secondary investigators in Year 1 of *Seals, Stigma and Survival* representing each of the focal countries in this project: Greenland, Finland, Norway and Canada.

Mr. Erik Kielsen works for the development company Innovation South Greenland, where he is a consultant for fishermen and hunters, as well as other businesses and companies. He also owns and operates a small company Kielsen`s Coordination, where he specializes in coordinating logistics for Arctic researchers and journalists in preparation for their work in South Greenland. He also works as a guide, translator, runner, and more for researchers and journalists as part of his logistics coordination.

Dr. Kristina Svelds is a senior researcher at the Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE) and an Associate Professor at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. Dr. Svelds specializes in marine governance with a particular focus on fisheries in transitioning societies. Her interdisciplinary expertise and research interests encompass fisheries governance, gender dynamics in blue sectors, sustainability, and human-wildlife conflicts in resource management. She actively collaborates on studies involving Fisheries Local Action Groups (EU FLAGs) and has led social research on the Baltic Grey Seal and the small-scale fisheries sector in the Baltic Sea. As a co-founder of the gender research network Sisters in the Arctic Blue, she has been dedicated to advancing marine social science and has served as Secretary of the European Society for Rural Sociology (ESRS) since 2011. She is the co-author of: “Struggling towards co-existence of the Baltic Sea coastal fisheries and the grey seal” (with P. Salmi, N. F. Coelho, V. Eriksson, S. Königson, E. Lehtonen, S-G Lunneryd, P. Suuronen, M. Vetemaa, Å. Waldo) (2025, Maritime Studies), “Mitigating a social conflict between seal, conservation and fisheries in the Baltic Sea: multilevel and synergistic approaches” (with Pekka Salmi, Petri Suuronen, Nelson F. Coelho, Åsa Waldo, Sara Königson, Sven-Gunnar Lunneryd, Viktor Eriksson, Markus Vetemaa, Esa Lehtonen, Naja Dyrendom Graugaard, and Maria Johansson) (2022, TemaNord), “The impacts of seals and cormorants experienced by Baltic Sea commercial fishers” (with P. Salmi, J. Mellanoura, and J. Niukko) (2019, Luke Natural Resources and Bioeconomy Studies).

Mr. James Winter is a Newfoundlander and the founding president of the Canadian Sealers Association. He is a retired writer/broadcaster with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and co-hosted a number of programs including “The Fisherman’s Broadcast” based in Newfoundland and Labrador. Later Winter worked in the Canadian civil service for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and he also worked for an international fishing company headquartered in Newfoundland. While a journalist he won the award as “best writer radio” from the Association of Canadian Radio and Television Artists (ACTRA). As a journalist, Winter first became involved in sealing when he investigated and reported on the hunt and the protests against it from on the ice. He became a licensed sealer and conducted participant observation of the seal hunt off the coast of Newfoundland in 1977 and 1978.

Dr. Helena Gonzales Lindberg is a senior researcher at Nordland Research Institute in Bodø, Northern Norway. Currently, her research is mainly about climate adaptation in the Arctic region (Northern Norway, Svalbard), with a keen interest in the powers and roles of visual representation. She has an interdisciplinary background in human geography and political science and wrote her dissertation about the constitutive power of maps in the Arctic.

iii. Supportive Partner:

Seals, Stigma and Survival benefits from in-kind support from the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission/NAMMCO (represented in the project by Geneviève Desportes). NAMMCO/ Desportes has provided aid in research, fieldwork, outreach and communication support. NAMMCO is an international regional body for cooperation on conservation, management and study of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and pinnipeds (seals and walrus) in the North Atlantic. The members of NAMMCO — Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway — are committed to sustainable and responsible use of all living marine resources, including marine mammals.

iv. Observers:

This project includes project observers. The observers are individuals who participated either in an interview or an off-the-record conversation as part of the primary research. Observer status in this project focuses on transparency to help enable project participants to get updates on the project's progress, including publications and fostering multidisciplinary and international researchers and representatives network building. Individuals were given the option as to whether they wanted to conceal or share their names and contact information as observers. Not all project participants opted in to observe the project's progress.

3. Support

We would like to acknowledge and thank our funders for Year 1 of *Seals, Stigma and Survival: Finding Solutions to the EU Stigmatization of Seal Hunting*. We received our primary financial support from the Nordic Arctic Programme funding which is hosted by the Nordic Council in Greenland. The project was initially funded in 2023 but was deferred until 2025. The project also received support for fieldwork in South Greenland from Innovation South Greenland. Innovation South Greenland helped through support for travel related costs for Secondary Investigator Erik Kielsen to Narsaq, Nanortalik and Qaqortoq in the South Greenland region. We would also like to thank the University of Southern Denmark's Department of Political Science and Public Management, the university's SDU Arctic network and the SDU Ethics Committee. The department is the host of the project and both the department and the SDU Arctic network have helped to raise the profile of the project. Specifically within the department we would like to acknowledge the support and aid of the departmental secretariat for their administrative support in budget administration and project application completion, and principal investigator Danita Burke's associated International Politics and Border Region Studies group and the Center for War Studies for their support for the project. We would also like to acknowledge and thank NAMMCO for their partnership. Lastly, thank you to all who participated in our project and for your feedback on this report.

4. Year 1 Project Timeline: A Summary

Year 1 project period: March 2025 to March 2026

- Fieldwork (Archives) – March 2025 – A three day visit to the Laurier Archives at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

- Fieldwork (Interviews) – April-December 2025
 - Reach out and scheduling of new interviews stopped in October 2025 with final interviews completed in December 2025;
 - Most interviews were completed remotely via teams with some completed in person or using a hybrid approach
 - Translation support provided by Erik Kielsen, Kristina Svells and Helena Gonzales Lindberg
 - Tour of the Carino Processing Plant – South Dildo, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada – April 2025
 - Copenhagen, Denmark – May 2025
 - Brussels, Belgium – June 2025
 - South Greenland/ Kalaallit Nunaat – July-October 2025
- Key Publications (as of December 2025):
 - August 2025: Op-Ed - “The European Union excluded Greenland from public consultations on the EU seal product ban” via *The Conversation Canada*
 - November 2025: Book - *Greenpeace in the Circumpolar North: Lessons Learned from the Anti-Sealing Era* via Routledge
 - November 2025: Discussion Paper - “Acknowledging and Addressing the Absence of Greenlandic Public Input into the EU’s 2024 Public Consultations on the Fitness of its Trade in Seal Products Regulations” via SDU Arctic
- CWS WarPod podcast appearance (Principal Investigator Danita Burke) – December 2025
- Observer Draft Report Presentation and Feedback Session – January 26, 2026
- Virtual book launch event, Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh – February 27, 2026 (Principal Investigator Danita Burke)
- Conference attendance – Arctic Food Forum, Sweden (Secondary Investigator Erik Kielsen) – March 2026

5. Year 1 Data Collection and Fieldwork

Year 1 data collection included archival research and in-depth interviews. Archival research was conducted at Laurier Archives and Special Collections, in Waterloo, Canada. Archival fieldwork at the Laurier Archives, Wilfrid Laurier University was conducted to explore the archive’s “Environmental Conservation Movement in Canada”¹ collection. The archival research trip was supported by a Joan Mitchell Travel Award, awarded to PI Danita Burke in 2023, but deferred to 2025 due to cancer treatment. Interviews were conducted in-person and virtually from April-December 2025 with interviewees predominately based in Greenland, Norway, Finland, Åland Islands, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Belgium (Brussels), and Canada.

i. Archival Research

The archival research conducted at Laurier Archives and Special Collections, in Waterloo, Canada was jointly conducted to support the *Seals, Stigma and Survival* project, as well support the completion of Burke’s project *Moral Legitimacy, Stigma and Environmental Activism in the 21st Century: Greenpeace in the Arctic*. Burke’s *Greenpeace in the Arctic* project was supported by a Northern Scholars Visiting Fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the

Humanities, University of Edinburgh in 2022-2023. The completion of this fellowship project was stopped early and delayed until 2025.

Canada is the origin of two of the most influential anti-sealing activist organisations in the world: Greenpeace (founded in British Columbia 1971 initially called the Don't Make a Wave Committee) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (founded in New Brunswick in 1969). The Laurier Archives and Special Collections research helped to support the background research of *Seals, Stigma and Survival*, with a focus on the impact of anti-sealing, and wider anti-hunting and trapping sentiments, emerging in the mid-20th century had on northern communities and economies in Canada.

Laurier Archives specifically houses the “Environmental Conservation Movement in Canada” collection. The Environmental Conservation Movement in Canada collection contains: records relating to the environmental conservation movement in Canada, with an emphasis on water resources, biosphere reserves and the management of Canada’s northern resources. Our collections include the records of national environmental organizations and local conservation organizations as well as the personal papers of environmental activists and scholars who study the environment and resource management in Canada.ⁱⁱ

During the archival visit, records accessed focused on information on traditional knowledge, the anti-trapping and anti-harvest movement, Greenpeace, and the Northern Canada economy. Specifically records accessed were from Fonds S469 - Canadian Arctic Resources Committee fonds.ⁱⁱⁱ

Key insights from the archival research at the Laurier Archives for *Seals, Stigma and Survival* include:

- “The loss of trapping would have extremely grave consequences for aboriginal and other cultures in Canada”; For Inuit communities the loss of trade means “increased incidence of alcoholism and suicide...from the loss of the fur trade” (p. 1 of report from 1988; Fur Institute of Canada – S469, Box 292, File 13.1.24)
- Indigenous Survival International were extremely active in trying to help and protect northern Indigenous communities impacted by the anti-sealing movement including giving evidence in London and Montreal as part of submissions to the Canadian Royal Commission on seals and the sealing industry, including insight into the anticipated level of devastation that the collapse of the sealing industry and wider cultural acceptance for sealing practices would have on Indigenous hunters, their communities and their cultures, Greenpeace’s role in the anti-sealing movement and their views on the Government of Canada’s handling of the situation (e.g. Indigenous Survival International holdings under S469, Box 48, File 2.9.3)
- There was awareness at the time that there was a very clear and deliberate agenda of segregation by anti-sealing/anti-harvesting activists – “The aim is to segregate fur-wearers as a class of people who engage in a practice which is morally and aesthetically offensive to an increasingly large proportion of the general public” (S469, Box 270, File 13.1.2(2))
- Fake fur is not exempt: Fake fur “perpetuates the attitudes which lie at the root of the exploitation and killing of animals” there the aim of some activists is “making the public aware that fur is the concrete proof, not of status, glamour, and prestige, but of oppression, brutality, and moral and aesthetic backwardness” (S469, Box 270, File 13.1.2(2))

- IFAW income in 1981 in large part from its anti-sealing activism was reportedly \$3 207 982 (not sure if this is Canadian or American) (S469, Box 270; 13.1.22).
 - Using the Bank of Canada inflation calculator^{iv} (March 31, 2025), and assuming the amount stated is in Canadian dollars, the amount raise is valued at approximately \$11 031 668.06 CAD today.
- IFAW reportedly lied about an experience with a helicopter in the Magdalen Islands, which locals protested and pushed over the helicopter which was empty. IFAW protesters came back the next day and staged a photoshoot whereby activists pretended to escape the helicopter to give the appearance they were personally targeted when there were not present when the incident happened (S469, Box 270; 13.1.22).
- Different definitions for subsistence, domestic/personal use and commercial use of harvested renewable resources (S469, Box 60, File 2.18.12)
 - Observation: Contemporary discussions about the definitions of these terms appear to either conflate subsistence with personal use or segment subsistence as a solely indigenous experience. Some of the later tendency to view subsistence practices as something uniquely Indigenous also appears in the files accessed at the archives.

Please note that all the archival data collected which is relevant to the project, with citation and use/acknowledgement instructions, has been provided to project observers. If you are a project observer and you have not received a link to this informed, *please get in touch* with PI Burke. Access to this information ends at the end of Year 1 of the project.

ii. Interviews

The interviews in Year 1 were conducted by project Burke with the aid of secondary investigators Erik Kielsen, Jim Winter, Kristina Svelds and Helena Gonzales Lindberg. Kielsen, Svelds and Gonzales Lindberg provided translation support for the project's information sheet and consent form into Kalaallisut/Greenlandic, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish. Svelds and Gonzales Lindberg were available to aid in translation support for interviewees wishing to participate and speak Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian.

Erik Kielsen played a central role in all aspects of interviews with stakeholders and rightsholders in Greenland. Kielsen is a logistics specialist with experience aiding researchers and journalists seeking to engage people in South Greenland. Kielsen took the lead in identifying, contacting and building connections between locals and *Seals, Stigma and Survival*, travelled to Narsaq, Nanortalik and Qaqortoq in South Greenland for the interviews, participated in all interviews with Greenlandic hunters and provided Kalaallisut translation support, and aided in the review of all transcripts with the permission of interviewees.

Jim Winter also took the lead in the interviewing of three retired Canadian civil servants formerly involved in aspects of seal research, management and diplomacy. Winter is a retired CBC journalist, former employee of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and founding president of the Canadian Sealers Association and had prior working relationships with the three interviewees. For full copies of these interviews, check out the "Jim Winter Interview Series" (See below 7.ii.b).

A question list was prepared for engaging with hunters and their representatives in advance of fieldwork. This question list was developed by Burke in consultation with Kielsen and Winter. Kielsen and Winter have experience hunting seals and helped to provide an

Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspective on how to approach the subject of seal hunting, the EU and the legacy of anti-sealing activism in a way that elevated hunters by providing a space for them to reflect on their experiences, concerns, aspirations and hopes in a culturally and ethically sensitive manner.

In total:

- 44 interviews and off the record conversations were completed
 - Some interviews were later categorized as conversations as individuals decided to not formally participate in the project after being sent their transcripts.
- 34 interview transcripts are approved for use on the project with an additional 4 pending approval (as of January 2026)
 - Of the people spoken to, 19 are hunters or have disclosed that they have hunted seals at some point.
- 3 interview transcripts are still pending participant review and response (as of January 2026)

Honorariums were made available to all Indigenous and hunters/sealers who participated in *Seals, Stigma and Survival* at the rate of 500 Danish Krone per hour. This rate is based on rate set by Innovation South Greenland while facilitating the Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland fieldwork and engagement of Kalaallit/Greenlandic hunters. The same rate was offered, regardless of the country/ethnicity, to all hunters/sealers in acknowledgement of their place as subject-matter experts and traditional knowledge holders for their respective cultures and to ensure equality for the time and participation in the project. Some hunters/sealers offered the honorariums opted out of receiving it.

6. Preliminary Findings:

Below is an overview of some preliminary Year 1 findings, based largely from primary data collection, hunters and advocates across the Circumpolar North. A cross-regional point that came through in our data collection is the role of predominately urban-based EU policy makers, environmental and animal rights activists and their supports in shaping decision-making that marginalizes practitioners and their communities who live with the direct repercussions of seal-focused regulations. Views expressed indicate a sense of disconnect between policy discussion, formulation and leaders from the lived realities of, and respect for the knowledge of and input from, hunters and fishers.

i. Greenland

- Local hunters expressed a keen interest in greater involvement in national and international discussions on the future of sealing, including interest in EU policy makers to come and to be heard from firsthand.
- Of the seven hunters spoken to none were aware that the EU had a public consultation process on the fitness of its seal product ban in 2024 which they could have contributed to. Regret was expressed that the opportunity to participate was lost due to lack of knowledge about the public consultations when they were open for contributions.
- Concern was expressed about to what extent the EU brought its public consultations process to the attention of the national hunting and fishing association, KNAPK, so that it could have helped their membership know about the public consultation opportunity.

- Emphasis was made by hunters that activists and policy makers need to remember that Inuit hunters do not hunt white coat seal pups so that anger against this form of hunting should not penalize their personal and community economies and practices.
- When discussing the terms subsistence and commercial hunting, it is clear at least with the individuals spoken to, there is no clear separate of the two as the traditional and professional relationship between hunting as a cultural practice, economic pursuit and practical endeavour for daily living are all intricately intertwined.

ii. EU Nordics (Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Åland Islands) + Estonia

- Scientists emphasized the lack of public awareness about the role of seals in the health of marine ecosystems, such as the relationship between seals and parasites prevalence including parasites of which can be transmitted to humans and rising rates of seal-borne parasites noted in commercial fish species.
- Seals were central to the societal and economic evolution of many coastal communities in the Nordic region for centuries. Significant downward pressures on seal populations in the post-Second World War era to the 1960s and regulatory changes, however, largely eliminated sealing as a profession and practice. Local efforts to reconnect and pass on sealing knowledge and cultural heritage, coupled with mounting concerns about the impact of recovered seal populations on commercial fisheries, has contributed to a resurgence in interest in sealing in the region.
- Hunters expressed frustration about the interpretation and application of Indigeneity and the exclusion of native Swedes and Finns and their millennia of cultural and economic relationships with seals. Specifically, frustration appeared directed largely toward the EU's seal ban formulation and its role in devaluing, suppressing and erasing sealing traditions, practices and knowledge and knowledge holders in the region.
- Current formulation of EU regulations on the killing and permitted uses of seals within member-states has created an ethical dilemma. Under current rules hunters in member-states, most vocally in Sweden and Finland/Åland Islands, are legally obligated to violate local hunting ethics and traditions as they are not permitted to fully use and share seals beyond personal use. Hunters have been very vocal about this in feedback to the EU as part of the 2024 fitness check public consultation processes.
- In Denmark there is growing grey seal population, especially off of Bornholm, but the rise in the seal population is occurring as the presence of fishers to hunt seals is decreasing dramatically. So while regulatory restrictions impact the ability to hunt seals and manage populations, even with regulatory changes there is a skill deficit as a result of the loss in fishers available to hunt them at this time.
- In the Åland Islands, present rules restrict hunters to only use seals for personal use within their households, but there is a serious need to be able to share seals and generate some income from seal hunting as there are hidden expenses. While there is a desire for sealing to be able to cover expenses like gas, issues with environmental toxins and trichinella require specialized and expensive testing if people want to consume the meat. The testing of meat is not required for personal use but people consuming the meat are taking a risk of consuming untested meat and there is a lack of infrastructure in place for testing as wild meat must be sent to private labs as they cannot be tested by commercial butchers.

- There is a lot of interest in the Swedish government to modify regulations around the hunting of seals to increase their hunting. However seal hunting is regulated in part by the EU and domestically (there are a number of different agencies within the Swedish government that are in charge of different aspects of seal regulations, hunting practices, health and safety, etc.), so the process of change is slower than desired and not straightforward.

iii. Norway

- Concern from local fishers/hunters about the future of commercial sealing based out of Norway is high. Points raised on this include the loss of generational knowledge transfer of sealing skills and practices as the age of local hunters rise and new professional hunters are few and there is a lack of new vessels coming online that are able to participate in offshore sealing. The EU ban is seen as the major contributing factor to the decline of Norwegian commercial sealing.
- In Norway the attitude is that seals are viewed a resource, just like cod and herring, so the thinking around hunting seals is not because they are eat fish but because they lead to good sea-based products.
- Like in neighbouring Nordic countries, the importance of seals and sealing to early settlement and economic and societal development of Norway was raised.
- As Norway is not hindered in their domestic policy making about sealing in the way that neighbouring Nordic and Baltic EU members-states are, there is less of an incentive to make as much public noise about the EU sealing restrictions compared to states like Sweden, Finland and Estonia, because they do not have the same problems with seal management, restrictions on domestic commercialization, and seal-fisher conflicts.

iv. Canada

- Despite the inclusion of the Inuit/Indigenous and personal use exceptions, the current EU trade ban on seal product imports severely restricts Indigenous economies and potential for commercialization of seal products. For example, e-commerce is presently non-viable for shipping into the EU as people looking to purchase Indigenous produced seal-based products for personal use must transport the products personally into the EU as they cannot be shipped under the present regime.
- There were concerns expressed about the lack of understanding about the vital importance of seals and seal-focused scientific research as a means of understanding the wider implications of climate change on marine ecosystems and the health of other species such as cod and capelin.
- The role of violence against women and children was noted as an under-reported method by activists to suppress sealing knowledge transfer and terrorize rural and coastal communities into self-censorship and abandonment of cultural and economic practices.
- Regulations are creating internal barriers within Canada, such as differences in the classification of seals (meat in Quebec vs fish elsewhere in Canada). The regulatory distinctions on how seals are classified – meat vs fish – creates barriers like impacting whether certain seals products from one province may be shipped and sold in another and that is negatively impacting the sealing industry domestically in Canada.

7. Project Communication:

The following is a list of the project’s public communication including various publications, podcast appearances and presentations for Year 1 based on project research, fieldwork, data analysis and publications.

i. Publications:

a. Academic Pieces (Articles, Discussion Papers and Books):

1. Burke, D and Kielsen E. (2025) “Acknowledging and Addressing the Absence of Greenlandic Public Input into the EU’s 2024 Public Consultations on the Fitness of its Trade in Seal Products Regulations”. Discussion Paper. SDU Arctic, November 8.^v
 - a. Title was updated after publication upon the receipt of feedback on potential ambiguity implied about whose input was the focus of the piece. The focus is on general public engagement in the EU public consultations.
2. Burke, D. (2025) *Greenpeace in the Circumpolar North: Lessons Learned from the Anti-Sealing Era*. Routledge.^{vi}
 - a. This was written using primary data from predominately other research projects of PI Burke, and includes some of the archive materials collected during “Seals, Stigma and Survival” project from the Laurier Archives. It was completed during the project period but no project funding was used in its completion. No interview data collected during this project was used in the completion of this book.

b. Non-Academic Pieces (Excluding the project website)

1. Burke, D. and Kielsen, E. (2025). “The European Union excluded Greenland from public consultations on the EU seal product ban. Why?”. *The Conversation*, August 27.^{vii}
 - a. This piece includes preliminary research on the failure of the EU to obtain Kalaallit/Greenlandic public input into the public consultations for its 2024 fitness test of the trade in seal products regulations. The piece calls upon the EU to pause the already delayed publication of its fitness check report and open its public consultations again with outreach to the Kalaallit public to get some input from one of the areas hit hardest by the seal product ban. This piece includes quotes from two interviews from the project completed by SI Kielsen and PI Burke with KNAPK community representatives.

ii. Website Pieces (Selection):^{viii}

a. Fieldwork Reflection Series:

1. Interview with Juha Ylimaunu, expert in the Finnish human-seal cultural and historical relationship (November 27, 2025)^{ix}
2. Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland Fieldwork – July-October 2025 (November 3, 2025)^x
3. Fieldwork: EU – Brussels (September 16, 2025)^{xi}
4. Archival Research at Laurier Archives, Wilfrid Laurier University (September 7, 2025)^{xii}
5. Parasitic Nose Worms: Seal to Human Transfer of Parasites (June 26, 2025)^{xiii}

6. Fieldwork visit to Carino Processing Ltd – April 2025 (May 15, 2025)^{xiv}

b. Jim Winter Interview Series:

1. Part 2: Secondary Investigator Jim Winter’s interview with retired government scientist Dr. Mike Hammill (December 18, 2025)^{xv}
2. Part 1: Secondary Investigator Jim Winter’s interview with retired government scientist Dr. Mike Hammill (December 15, 2025)^{xvi}
3. Part 2: Interview between secondary investigator Jim Winter and retired Fisheries and Oceans Canada scientist Dr. Garry Stenson (December 11, 2025)^{xvii}
4. Part 1: Interview between secondary investigator Jim Winter and retired Fisheries and Oceans Canada scientist Dr. Garry Stenson (December 8, 2025)^{xviii}
5. Part 2: SI Jim Winter’s interview with Mike Kehoe of the Coastal People Resource Protection Group (November 24, 2025)^{xix}
6. Part 1: SI Jim Winter’s interview with Mike Kehoe of the Coastal People Resource Protection Group (November 10, 2025)^{xx}

c. EU Trade in Seal Products Fitness Test Series:

1. Comments provided to the “Trade in seal products – fitness check of EU rules” 2024 public consultations (Canada) (June 2, 2025)^{xxi}
2. Comments provided to the “Trade in seal products – fitness check of EU rules” 2024 public consultations (Sweden) (May 5, 2025)^{xxii}
3. Comments provided to the “Trade in seal products – fitness check of EU rules” 2024 public consultations (Denmark) (April 7, 2025)^{xxiii}
4. Introducing Stigma (April 2, 2025)^{xxiv}
5. Comments provided to the “Trade in seal products – fitness check of EU rules” 2024 public consultations (Finland) (March 24, 2025)^{xxv}

d. New Research:

1. RESCHEDULED (Now February 27th, 2026) - Virtual Book Launch for “Greenpeace in the Circumpolar North: Lessons Learned from the Anti-Sealing Era” at the University of Edinburgh’s Institute for the Advanced Studies in the Humanities (January 12, 2026)^{xxvi}
2. New Publication – Greenpeace in the Circumpolar North: Lessons Learned from the Anti-Sealing Era (November 17, 2025)^{xxvii}
3. Cultural genocide, International Fund for Animal Welfare and the pursuit of an anti-sealing agenda (September 28, 2025)^{xxviii}
4. New piece out now in The Conversation! “The European Union excluded Greenland from public consultations on the EU seal product ban. Why?” (August 28, 2025)^{xxix}
5. The Inuit Exception: Fit for Purpose? (August 1, 2025)^{xxx}
6. Introducing Non-violence (June 16, 2025)^{xxxi}
7. Introducing Stigma (April 2, 2025)^{xxxii}

iii. Podcasts and Presentations

Erik Kielsen

- a. Attending the Umeå University Arctic Forum “Food, transitions and Indigenous knowledges – finding new pathways towards resilient societies in the North” event.^{xxxiii}
 - i. Initially scheduled for September 2025 but postponed until March 2026^{xxxiv}

Danita Burke

- b. Interview with NiCHE/Network in Canadian History & Environment (TBD)^{xxxv}
- c. Center for War Studies, SDU *WarPod* podcast (recorded in October 2025) – Airing December 16, 2025^{xxxvi}
- d. Virtual book launch event, Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh – February 27, 2026^{xxxvii}

Third Party Coverage

- e. NiCHE/Network in Canadian History & Environment – “Seals, Stigma and Survival Project – Archival Research at Laurier Archives” (January 30, 2026)^{xxxviii}
- f. Wilfrid Laurier University – Publication of piece acknowledging the completion of archival research in connection to the Joan Mitchell Travel Award to PI Danita Burke – May 12, 2025^{xxxix}

Team

- g. Observer presentation and feedback on Year 1 project progress report – January 26, 2026.

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ⁱ <https://library.wlu.ca/research/laurier-archives/collections>

ⁱⁱ <https://library.wlu.ca/research/laurier-archives/collections>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://libarchives.wlu.ca/index.php/canadian-arctic-resources-committee-fonds>

^{iv} <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>

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- ^v https://www.sdu.dk/en/forskning/ans/research/seals_stigma_and_survival/publications
- ^{vi} <https://www.routledge.com/Greenpeace-in-the-Circumpolar-North-Lessons-Learned-from-the-Anti-Sealing-Era/Burke/p/book/9781041143529>
- ^{vii} <https://theconversation.com/the-european-union-excluded-greenland-from-public-consultations-on-the-eu-seal-product-ban-why-263387?>
- ^{viii} Additional publications on the website can be found under the ‘Research’ tab under the ‘General’ subheading.
- ^{ix} <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2025/11/27/interview-with-juha-ylimaunu-expert-in-the-finnish-human-cultural-relationship/>
- ^x <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2025/11/03/kalaallit-nunaat-greenland-fieldwork-july-october-2025/>
- ^{xi} <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2025/09/16/fieldwork-eu-brussels/>
- ^{xii} <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2025/09/07/archival-research-at-laurier-archives-wilfrid-laurier-university/>
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- ^{xv} <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2025/12/18/part-2-secondary-investigator-jim-winters-interview-with-retired-government-scientist-dr-mike-hammill/>
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- ^{xxi} <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2025/06/02/comments-provided-to-the-trade-in-seal-products-fitness-check-of-eu-rules-2024-public-consultations-canada/>
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- ^{xxiv} <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2025/04/02/introducing-stigma/>
- ^{xxv} <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2025/03/24/comments-provided-to-the-trade-in-seal-products-fitness-check-of-eu-rules-2024-public-consultations-finland/>
- ^{xxvi} <https://survivingsealingstigma.com/2026/01/12/virtual-book-launch-for-greenpeace-in-the-circumpolar-north-lessons-learned-from-the-anti-sealing-era-at-the-university-of-edinburghs-institute-for-the-advanced-studies-in-the-humanities-janua/>
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- ^{xxxiii} <https://www.umu.se/en/arctic-centre/collaborations/arctic-forum-food/>
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- ^{xxxv} <https://niche-canada.org/>
- ^{xxxvi} https://soundcloud.com/thewarpod/cws-research-seals-stigma-and-survival-unpacking-the-legacy-of-anti-sealing-activism-w-dr-danita-catherine-burke?si=d4288e7c0d144851b2b5c6709896f7b6&utm_campaign=social_sharing&utm_medium=text&utm_source=clipboard
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