



ARCTIC CENTRE
ARKTINEN KESKUS



Living with 'Barbarians'

Within the Commercial Sealing Industry

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... our little friends...?





”...Intrepid seamen” (mid-late 1800s)





"Baby killers" (~ 1970)



Source: Fondation Brigitte Bardot

http://www.fondationbrigittebardot.fr/sites/default/files/diaporama/BB_phoque.jpg?1375434762640



”It is not humane to kill seals, I think someone should kill these idiots the way they are killing our seals.” (2011)





The Commercial Seal Hunt and its Image

- Has been labelled as inherently bad, cruel and unnecessary
- Policies, such as 2009 EU seal products trade regulation, based on this image.
- Where does most public information come from?
- Based on what knowledge is the image created?
- Are sealers 'Barbarians', 'Murderers' and 'Baby killers'?





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Woodstock, Newfoundland

- Population of 199 (work force 85)
- Local economy dominated by fisheries, followed by retail and mechanics
 - ➡ Every fisherman is also a sealer
- Outmigration (around 41% since 1991) due to declining fisheries/seal, especially of young people
- Wish to stay, but employment almost impossible
- Closure of primary school in 2008



The Canadian Commercial Seal Hunt –

Basic Facts

- Hunted species: Harp seal "Beaters" (ca. 3-4 weeks of age; silvery fur) hunted for pelts, blubber, flippers;
- Based on Marine Mammal Regulations
- Compulsory training for obtainment ("Humane Harvesting of Seals") of License
- Around 12.000 sealing licenses though varying numbers active sealers



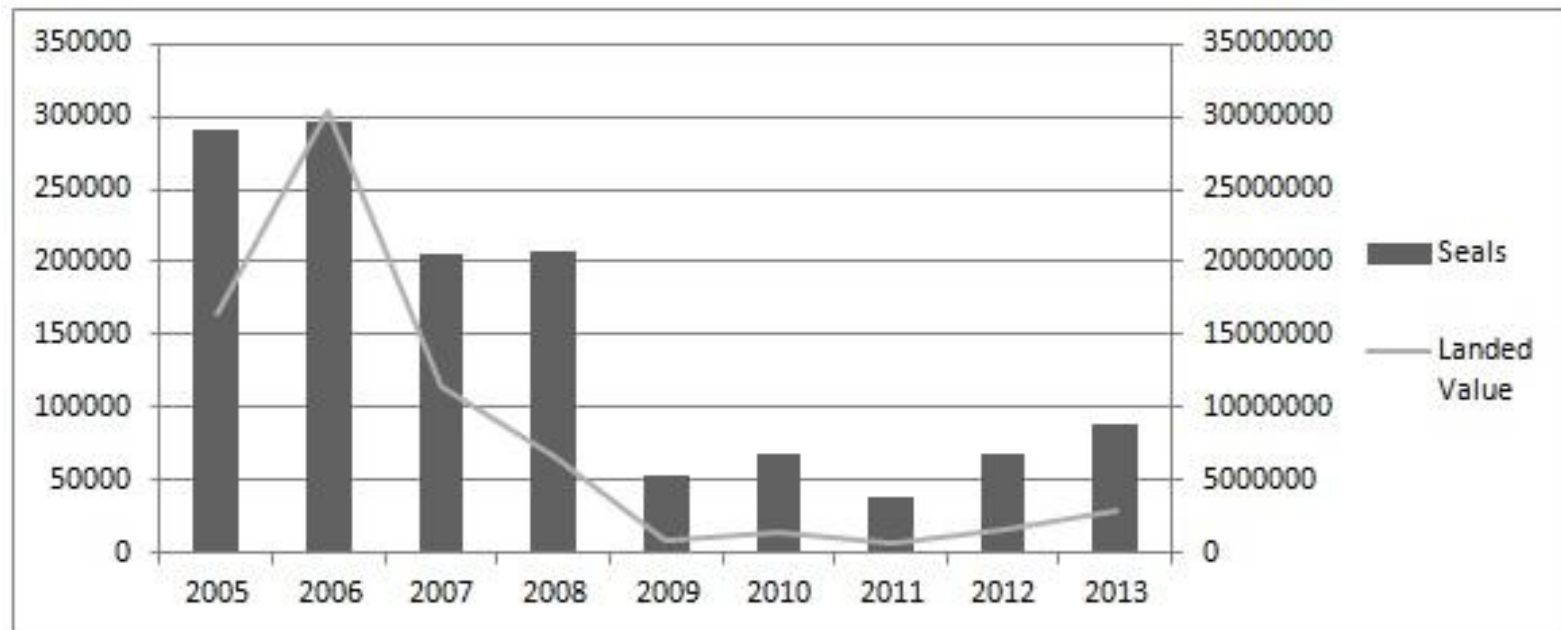
The Canadian Commercial Seal Hunt – Basic Facts

- Quota for 2013: 400.000 (ca. 90.000 taken)
- Hunt carried out in Gulf of St. Lawrence; the 'Front'; and landsmen hunt
- Vessels up to 65 ft engaged in hunt,
- No ice-going vessels (ice-breakers) – fiberglass hulls strengthened with wood

The Canadian Commercial Seal Hunt – Basic Facts

- Up to a third of the annual income is based on sealing

The Number of Seals vis-à-vis the Landed Value





The Seal Hunt on *Steff&Tahn*



Photo: Nikolas Sellheim



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The Seal Hunt on *Steff&Tahn*

- Shooting – gaffing – stunning – checking – bleeding – pelting
- Stringent application of the three-step-process
- Final catch: 1.987 seals
- Ca. 98% irretrievably unconscious upon gaffing aboard
- Keeping of ca. 200 carcasses and hearts for community consumption (given, not sold)



The Seal Hunt on *Steff&Tahn*

- Professionalism
- Significant difference to urban perception of human-seal relationship (de-personalized; resource instead of pet; fish;)
- Seal Fishery
- Seals are one among many species to 'harvest'



... umm, so...

- Seal hunting has very bad reputation
- There is not much economic benefit
- There are high investments and uncertain yields
- There are dangers, discomfort and stress.

WHY ON EARTH WOULD ANYBODY GO SEALING??

Significance of the Seal Hunt

- Provides first work opportunity after winter
- Generates income through sales
- Generates significant secondary income for department stores in small communities
- Provides communities with free food
- It is a means to live life; an inherent part of identity ("the sea in our blood")



The Processing Sector

- Two processing plants, one small plant in Fleur-de-Lys, northern NL, one in Dildo, southern NL
- Provides employment opportunities for all age and social groups
- Dildo plant employs 38 people permanently, up 100 in the 'wet season'



The Processing Sector

- Gained importance with closure of plant in Catalina in 2012.
- A means for employment
- Contributor to regional integrity
- Pride and Identity



The Processing Sector



PHOTO: Nikolas Sellheim





Where does this leave us?

- There is a need to a rational discourse
- There is a need for knowledge
- ~~There is a need to realize~~ We are not barbarians. We are husbands and wives. We are humans.”



Thank you!

