



Global Nonviolent Action Database

Published on *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>)

Canadian environmentalists campaign against seal hunting, 2009

March

2009

to: May

2009

Country: Canada

Goals:

The campaigners main goal was to end the practice of seal hunting. In this campaign they focused their achievement of this goal on raising awareness around the issue of the seal hunt.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 002. Letters of opposition or support › United States President Barack Obama sends letter of support to end the seal hunt
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 030. Rude gestures
- 035. Humorous skits and pranks › Fake baby seal were placed on the ice and triggered to speak messages such as "hey, over here baby killer, prove you're a real man and show me your Canadian club" and exploded with a burst of red dye and cherry Jello
- 043. Political mourning
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 010. Newspapers and journals

Methods in 4th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 010. Newspapers and journals

Methods in 5th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 010. Newspapers and journals

Methods in 6th segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 006. Group or mass petitions

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Environment

Group characterization:

- Environmentalists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Captain Paul Watson, Founder and President of Sea Shepherd

Partners:

LUSH cosmetic company

External allies:

Canadian Senator Marc Harb

Involvement of social elites:

Canadian Senator Marc Harb, as noted under external allies

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Canadian Senator Marc Harb

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:

Media sources joined throughout the campaign

Segment Length: 8 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Canadian government, seal hunters

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

None known

Campaigner violence:

None known

Repressive Violence:

None known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

2 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Seal hunting, or the slaughter of seals (depending on with whom you are speaking) has become a very controversial topic over recent years. In the past, seals were just another resource used by those living in Northern and more remote communities. The meat was used for human consumption and the oil for lamps and cooking. These particular products, as well as the pelts themselves were exported to other countries for further use. The hunt of these animals was also beneficial to ensure the number of cod fish remained high. The seals were considered pests that were ruining the fish stocks, which provided another valuable resource. In 2005, the value of the seal hunt exceeded \$16.5 million with the individual pelts hovering around \$105 each. Currently, the meat is consumed by both humans and animals and the oil provides a source of Omega-3.

However, not all Canadians felt the slaughter of this species should be happening, even for the most basic consumption. Traditionally, the hunter would approach a young seal and beat it with a club until it was dead. While the description may cause some to cringe, it causes anger for others. There are many environmental organizations that have worked to protect seals for future generations.

A major issue regarding activism around seal hunting in Canada was the lack of knowledge about the topic by the general public. Lack of interest was not necessarily the problem, but it happens to be a topic that is seldom heard about in the media (or other sources of information). In 2000, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) released a report on the public opinion of Canadians regarding the seal hunt. According to the report, 71% of Canadians were not very, or not at all aware with the issues surrounding the seal hunt. In contrast only 3% said they were very familiar with the issues. Education and accurate information are two key components to ensuring the ability of the general public to create a position on the seal hunt.

In 2009, the non-profit organization Sea Shepherd led a major campaign to raise awareness of this issue. Sea Shepherd was established in 1977 as an organization whose goals were focused around the protection of the oceans and marine biodiversity. Their overall focus was working towards protection now, for the survival of future generations. Their tactics to reaching their goals were all about direct action to investigate, document, expose, and confront illegal activities by nonviolent means. To combat the lack of education, Sea Shepherd along with the handmade cosmetic company LUSH, launched a campaign from March to May of 2009 to heighten the awareness of the general public.

The Sea Shepherd/LUSH campaign began March 16, 2009. To start with, LUSH created soap bars with 100% of the proceeds going to support Sea Shepherd in ending the seal hunt. They titled the soap “First Swim” as “about 95% of the seals slaughtered are babies less than 4 weeks old”.

During the campaign various employees of LUSH stores across Canada painted themselves completely red and laid on Canadian flags painted to look bloody. The goal of these demonstrations was to create a strong visual impact and to relay information to the public. In addition, the campaign included some (arguably) humorous pranks. Crew members of Sea Shepherd placed fake baby seals onto the ice to await their “fate”. When hunters would come close to these fuzzy fakes, they would be shocked to hear the seals saying comments such as, “hey, over here baby killer, prove you’re a real man and show me your Canadian club”. After heckling the sealers they would explode with a spray of red dye and cherry Jell-O.

The campaign’s success in terms of education was great, with 38,015 postcard petitions, 9,681 online petitions, 5,533 First Swim soap bars purchased, and \$36,894.02 donated to Sea Shepherd for further efforts to protect the seals. On May 2, 2009, the postcards were given to Canadian Senator Marc Harb with the “assurance that each petition will be delivered directly to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper at the nation’s capital in Ottawa, Ontario”.

Other successes came from Sea Shepherd’s awareness campaign, too. Not only did the general public become more aware of the issue, but the global community has taken notice as well. Slightly after the end of this campaign, the European Parliament banned the importation of seal products within the European Union. Other governments have also followed in their footsteps. Although the seal hunt in Canada continued on, the overall movement against the practice was gaining more momentum as well.

Research Notes

Sources:

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LUSH. (2012). End Canada’s licence to kill. Retrieved from <http://lush.com/saveourseals> on Feb.26/2012.

Sea Shepherd. (2009). Sea Shepherd crew plant 500 fake baby seals on the ice. Retrieved from <http://www.seashepherd.org/news-and-media/2009/04/01/sea-shepherd-crew-plant-500-fake-baby-seals-on-the-ice-354> on Feb.25/2012.

Sea Shepherd. (2012). Sea Shepherd and LUSH seal defense campaign a success. Retrieved from <http://www.seashepherd.org/seals/lush.html> on Feb.2/2012.

Additional Notes:

The following link has a compilation of various news clippings from the events of this campaign.

http://www.seashepherd.org/images/stories/sponsors/lush/090511_LUSH_Canadian_Seal_Campaign_Newspaper_Press_Coverage

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Megan Leskiw, 26/02/2012

A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.

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[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/included-innovative-organizational-formscommunication-forms>