The growth of anti-use campaigns, particularly anti-harvesting movements against trapping, sealing and logging, has had profound effects on Canada’s aboriginal and northern resource-based communities. Inuit communities in the NWT and Nunavut saw their way of living, and way of life, devastated by the anti-sealing campaign that destroyed the market for all seal products. The consequences were not only economic, “as self-supporting communities were reduced to welfare dependency, with a staggering suicide rate...” assert the authors, professors at the University of Northern British Columbia. The trapping industry was the next target, with “resource harvesters portrayed as brutal and savage, unsuited to the modern world.” Similarly, many BC communities, and the provincial government, depend on the forestry industry, which is constantly under attack from ecological and environmental interest groups. Heather Myers and Tracy Summerville examine the economic and social consequences of politically correct anti-use campaigns.


The growth of anti-harvesting movements — particularly with respect to trapping, sealing and logging — illustrates changing values, attitudes to authority, and accepted behaviours in Canada as well as other industrial states. The impact of these movements, particularly on aboriginal and northern resource-based communities, has resulted in serious consequences for their standards of living and ways of life.

The persistence of campaigning organizations and the constant intensification of demands suggest that these organizations will be a continuing influence in international relations as well as in domestic politics, though their preferred modes of action suggest they will be focusing their influence in the future not on states, but on citizens and corporations.

The nature of the campaigns raises serious questions about the representation of public values as well as co-optation of public policy processes. While the cases against government and corporate involvement in resource use and decision-making have frequently been made, our intent here is to critique the growing role of environmental interest groups in public decision-making and the way they claim to represent...
the greater public good — often without fair inclusion of stakeholders who are impacted directly by the decisions.

We use the term anti-use campaigns (AUCs), to characterize anti-harvesting/trapping/sealing/logging groups and their activities. We do not use this term interchangeably with environmental groups because we think that there is an important dichotomy to be made between a narrow focus on one issue and a more balanced, broader view that encompasses the larger picture of multiple parts and processes in an ecosystem, as well as the related human communities and their economies — that is, the essence of sustainable development (see figure 1).

Sustainable development comprises the three legs of ecology, society and economy, and it is recognized that without each of those legs being strong, the “stool” will fall. If people are removed from a viable living, how can they maintain their social community, and how can they protect the environment? AUCs ignore the concept of sustainable development, introduced by Gro Harlem Brundtland in her landmark 1987 report and incorporated into all facets of states’ policies since then. We both believe strongly in environmental protection but we do not believe that this can be achieved by a process that excludes the economy and community.

We use “community” rather than “society” because, as we illustrate throughout this paper, society’s values can sometimes reflect a tyranny of the majority and not a fair representation of those excluded from the political process.

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, Greenpeace and the International Fund for Animal Welfare opposed the Newfoundland seal hunt on the grounds of cruelty and ecological/over-harvesting arguments. Greenpeace claimed in 1977 that unless the seal quota was reduced, the seals would be extinct in five years. When it was proven that there was no population threat, and the management system was actually effective, Greenpeace then moved to an animal rights position that the hunt was cruel and that seals should not be hunted at all. Thus, the issue evolved as conditions demanded. Cruelty had emerged upon the field of public discourse, becoming a very important part of the seal hunt issue — and a powerfully emotional one.

Tactics used in the protests included spray-painting seal pups with green dye to ruin the value of the pelts, or covering them with protesters’ bodies (a healthy experience for the animal?); bringing Brigitte Bardot and other stars onto the ice floes; extensive media campaigns; postcard/letter campaigns; information packets containing pictures of the hunt, sent to British households; scientific and other reports. A gruesome film of the seal hunt was widely shown to great effect; this was later proven to have been staged — the Newfoundland “sealer” was paid by photographers to torture a seal, ignoring the usual practice of killing the seal before skinning it.

In the NWT and Nunavut, where the Inuit had a thriving and very sustainable economy based upon the use of seals for food, oil and skins, adult seals were hunted differently — by rifle and harpoon, taking great skill and patience. Nonetheless, The Inuit sealskin economy was gutted by the anti-sealing campaign that destroyed the markets for all seal products. The seal hunt revenues of $13 million per year in 1981 (roughly split between Inuit hunting adult seals and Newfoundlanders hunting pups) dropped to less than $3 million in 1983. Self-supporting communities were reduced to welfare dependency, with a staggering suicide rate, as people seriously questioned themselves and their culture in the face of condemnation by a modern, dominant, more powerful society in southern North America and Europe.

It is important to understand the nature of the northern resource-based economy. Canada’s northern aboriginal communities have always had an economy, whether measured in dollars or in food and materials produced, consumed and traded, that depended upon the wildlife, fish and other resources of the land. Even today, most northern aboriginal households have at least one harvester, who produces an

FIGURE 1: HOW NEW VALUES INFLUENCE RESOURCE POLITICS
Anti-use campaigns and resource communities: the consequences of political correctness

The Inuit sealskin economy was gutted by the anti-sealing campaign that destroyed the markets for all seal products. The seal hunt revenues of $13 million per year in 1981 dropped to less than $3 million in 1983. Self-supporting communities were reduced to welfare dependency, with a staggering suicide rate, as people seriously questioned themselves and their culture in the face of condemnation by a modern, dominant, more powerful society in southern North America and Europe.

The next target, some years later, was the trapping industry, and again the issue was nominally ecological (though no species of furbearer in Canada is currently threatened or endangered) but mainly about perceptions of cruelty. Much larger than the sealskin issue, the anti-trapping issue affected more than 100,000 aboriginal and non-aboriginal wild-fur trappers and their families across Canada, not to mention thousands more in secondary and tertiary sectors. In 1978, the wild-fur harvest in Canada was worth $82 million (the US produced $268 million — Alan Herscovici speculated that the US and USSR were not targeted by the anti-trapping campaign because they were much larger than Canada, and the latter made an easier target). The value of fur garments produced then was about $260 million, employing mostly small-scale artisanal producers. But only one to wear it."

In 1993, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs reported that 75 percent of this was traditionally exported to Europe as raw pelts or finished goods. It should be noted that Europe also produces a large part of the fur harvest, but this is mainly from fur farms, because wild fur bearers there have been rare for centuries.

A key tactic of the anti-sealing and anti-trapping efforts was to portray resource harvesters as brutal and savage, unsuited to the modern world. Fur use was portrayed as cruel, vain, archaic and grotesque. The anti-fur campaigns’ targets evolved over time, as well, to include fur-wearers: Lynx’s billboards said “It takes up to 40 dumb animals to make a fur coat. But only one to wear it.”

This issue has cycled, recurring periodically over the years. In the most recent round of anti-trapping pressures, in 1991, the European Community (EC) again proposed a ban on the import of furs caught in leg-hold traps. Canada, Russia and the US fought this regulation together, as a regional group that exports much of the fur to Europe. Passed in 1991, the European Community regulation never mentioned cruelty; it was justified on the basis of management concerns for “threatened or endangered species of wild fauna.” As noted earlier, none of the species at issue are threatened or endangered. Meanwhile, leg-hold traps could still be used in Europe, to trap "pests" and other animals.

As with the northern communities and their reliance on hunting and trapping, many British Columbia communities rely on the forest industry. People there have deep traditional, historical, social, cultural and economic ties to forestry and the land. Further, the government (and people) of BC relies on the approximately $4.2 billion in stumpage, income taxes and other revenues from forestry which fund their health, education, social and other government programs.

Originally, the campaigns against BC forestry focused on the use of chlorine in pulp and paper-making, the practice of large clear-cuts, and the use of old-growth trees for making pulp, but they have since evolved, intensifying and changing their demands over time (see W.T. Stanbury’s detailed chronology of these and other campaigns in Environmental Groups and the International Conflict over the Forests of British Columbia).

The experience in BC, starting with Clayoquot Sound (drawn from Stanbury) illustrates the moving targets: when one-third of the Clayoquot Sound area was permanently protected, and other management rules were imposed, Greenpeace-UK threatened another campaign against two major UK paper producers should they not cancel their contracts with MacMillan Bloedel (MB). Friends of Clayoquot Sound said they did not want to compromise at all — they wanted all the area intact. Though the BC government immediately implemented the recom-
mandations of an independent scientific panel, the Western Canada Wilderness Committee demanded instead an end to all logging in the area; Greenpeace and Friends of Clayoquot Sound added new criteria to be met by government and industry; Greenpeace threatened to reinitiate their boycott if MB tried to take clear-cuts of the size recommended by the panel (4 ha). The Rainforest Action Network (RAN) and the Natural Resources Defense Fund in the US continued their boycott actions; and the Coastal Rainforest Coalition launched a postcard campaign to push BC to adopt the panel recommendations into law and to extend them to the rest of BC.

Beyond Clayoquot Sound, other campaigns continue to intensify and alter the pressures on BC forestry to conform to new values. In 1994, coordinated protests in Victoria and Tacoma demanded an end to all industrial logging in BC. In 1997, several groups said they were now targeting the entire BC coast rainforest. In 1998, Greenpeace-Canada called for an end of all commercial logging of old growth in BC. RAN has identified their next target as companies selling any wood into the US from any temperate BC forest.

As the Clayoquot Sound campaign began to lose steam, the Great Bear Rainforest was identified as the next arena (a name with no basis in ecological science, which Patrick Moore has called “a pile of emotional rubbish”). Even though Interfor had reached agreement with several AUCs (a “truce” while the multi-stakeholder Land and Resources Management Process was underway), Greenpeace-UK started the Great Bear Rainforest campaign. Later this was made broader, aimed at stopping US firms from buying lumber from BC’s ancient rainforests.

Clearly the targets have been extended over time: demands transform to comprise different types of forest products, different areas and types of ecosystems, different forms and levels of protection, different AUCs. Subsequent demands are not necessarily consistent with previous ones, or with agreements negotiated.

Most importantly, these negotiated processes have typically included the AUCs, the targeted companies, and sometimes governments. Seldom have the affected communities been invited to the table. Land and Resource Management Processes which do include multiple stakeholders have often been boycotted by AUCs, or if they have participated, they have walked out if their demands have not been met. Or some groups may participate, while other groups will boycott. When a “Joint Solutions” process was proposed for the Great Bear Rainforest, it originally involved only AUCs and affected companies — not until First Nations and local communities forced the issue, were they allowed to participate.
Tactics used in BC’s war in the forest have included blockades and civil disobedience, spiking of trees and other sabotage, sit-ins at stores selling BC old-growth products, picketing publishers and newspapers that use BC paper, boarding ships carrying BC forest products, threatening boycotts of industrial users of old-growth lumber or pulp, newspaper ads exposing buyers of old-growth or other BC forest products. Pictures speak a thousand words, so posters, coffee-table books, photographs and films have been popular devices. In Europe, anti-logging groups trucked around “Stumpy” — a large old-growth cedar stump from BC — a simple, effective image implying ecological devastation of old-growth forests, but one which avoids addressing any of the nuances.

Another tactic, begun with Brigitte Bardot on the sea-ice, is to involve Hollywood stars in the fight — knowing an uncritical public will be attracted by the persona without questioning their professional qualifications as ecologists or forest managers. In 1996, the Coastal Rainforest Coalition used stars in a New York Times ad, calling on BC to end clear-cutting, to increase the amount of forest it protects, and to “end the stranglehold of the ten large logging companies controlling 61 percent of BC’s forest lands” (one suspects this would make the BC forest industry much more diversified than the Hollywood film industry). The threat was to undermine the $500 million a year film industry in BC.

Addressing the European Parliament, then Premier Mike Harcourt said “many of the environmental groups[sic], like Greenpeace, were simply being untruthful about what was going on in our province’s forests.” For instance, as Stanbury notes, Greenpeace Germany used a word for clear-cuts that means “deforestation” or “destruction,” without hope of replanting. BC was called “the Brazil of the North,” inferring massive deforestation and burning of rainforest for agriculture and other purposes — this gave a grossly exaggerated impression, and ignored the fact that reforestation has long been required in BC, and annual cuts (at about 1 percent per year of land included in the forest base) are set on the basis of sustained yield. Rainforest Action Network mounted its boycott against MacMillan Bloedel, claiming old-growth pulp was being used in paper products like telephone books and newsprint, even though much of the MB pulp was made from sawmill waste and recycled paper. J.K. Rowling even got in on the act with a recent Harry Potter release, claiming its printing on recycled paper saved some BC old-growth forest, when such wood is not used for paper-making in the first place unless it is sawmill waste or wood not suitable for lumber.

In summary, the pattern has been that campaigns evolve and change their focus over time, in order to keep up the pressure, and in order to keep the goal-posts moving. In the absence of scientific proof of endangerment, they shift focus to essentially value-driven judgments about whether sealing, trapping or logging are acceptable activities in the “modern” world. Simplistic mantras (“all hunting is bad”; “all logging is bad”) have replaced complex resource science and policy. The campaigns have moved away from using pressure on governments, to preferring direct market-based campaigns, targeting industrial consumers and retailers. This push and pull between industry and the AUCs leaves out the communities who are directly affected.
by job loss and the stigmatization of their livelihoods. We are not apologists for industry, we are making the case that as the AUCs push industry, either through government regulation or through public opinion and the markets, the communities have little access to the policy network to influence the effects on their livelihoods.

What do these campaigns illustrate about changing value systems and the tactics used to implement them, and about the external influence on resource-based communities?

Most obvious, there is a shift in public values about resources and the environment, from an extractive approach to one in which nature is valued more. This is possibly most noticeable amongst urban, industrialized populations. We would argue that AUCs have co-opted the new values by appearing to represent the public voice. As a result, AUCs have gained access to public policy processes, and failing satisfaction with those, have resorted to campaigns in order to achieve their goals, which have remained exclusive of the resource communities and cultures most directly affected.

Canada, the US and Europe, along with other industrialized states, have been undergoing profound changes in economic patterns, education and prosperity levels, and political attitudes, amongst other characteristics. Social values may be moving away from material concerns and economic growth, to focus more on intangible social gratifications — the “post-materialist transformation.” The effects seem to include a shift in public attitudes, from a devotion to authority, towards cynicism and self-assertiveness, citizens who are less compliant, more assertive, and less confident in their government institutions. Neil Nevitte links these post-industrial changes to evidence of a profound social transformation, as (among other effects) interest groups have been able to press for more entrenchment of their particular interests, environmental issues have come to the fore, the public is generally irritated by the status quo, and other penetrating value-shifts have occurred.

Significant changes in our economic lives are also occurring. Canada and other industrial states have seen their primary production and manufacturing sectors decline in importance, and the service sector increase. Manufacturing, resources and agriculture no longer generate jobs the way they used to. Thus, resource-based work is becoming less visible, and perhaps less valued by society-at-large. The campaigns against some Canadian resource uses have exemplified this changing set of values in both North America and Europe.

Manufacturing, resources and agriculture no longer generate jobs the way they used to. Thus, resource-based work is becoming less visible, and perhaps less valued by society-at-large. The campaigns against some Canadian resource uses have exemplified this changing set of values in both North America and Europe.

Unfortunately, while values may have shifted from an “old style” of thinking about resource extraction to a “new (post-materialist) style” (figure 1), AUC campaigns go even further. They reflect a new set of narrowly constructed views drawing on the perceived “social goods” of the shift in values — originally defined as “sustainable development” — but which they now focus on particular activities without the obligation to consider the broader contexts and interests affected by those practices. They appear to want to “give people more say and to protect nature” and so on, but they are doing so by returning to a narrow set of views that limits or discourages resource extraction and treats nature as more important than human communities. As Michael Kendu of the Sea Shepherd Society was quoted in Nunatsiaq News about the impacts of the anti-sealing campaign: “If a few people are hurt for the good of the global society, then that’s not our problem. It happens all the time.”

While the expression “environmentalist” is often used to describe a broad number of individuals and groups interested in protecting the environment, we are suggesting that AUCs represent a narrowly focused range of values along the spectrum of environmentalism. The views expressed by AUCs take little account of the cultures or practices that might very well already include sustainable resource extraction, or of the broader sets of concerns and needs of society and its many interest groups. Under these circumstances, AUCs act as eco-colonialists.

As part of a new “environmental consumerism,” AUCs may appeal to individuals who want to preserve nature for their own direct or indirect benefit. Unfortunately, this reinvents an imperialist process from earlier times, through forcing other countries, regions, individuals or communities to conduct their socioeconomic lives according to outside-imposed rules. Canada’s wilderness seems to have evolved from a resource that was exploited in order to serve European interests one or two centuries ago, to one that is to be preserved in order to serve those interests today. After all, argued Randy Hayes of RAN (quoted in Stanbury’s book), “Americans have the power to influence BC’s logging practices and safeguard a magnificent landscape they may one day wish to visit.” Neither the terms environmentalist nor post-materialist seem to capture the tone of this value shift: we prefer to call it eco-materialism.

While much of the literature about changing values has emphasized the idea that individuals are moving toward post-materialism, this seems much too simplistic. There is a considerable amount of materialism to be found. Birdwatchers travel great
argue that environmental NGOs are part of the policy process, but from a northern perspective the campaigns against resource harvesting are often seen as representing the interests of rich, urban, well-fed people who have destroyed their own immediate environment and now want to save others; rich people who have a secure livelihood fail to understand that other people do not. Too late, Greenpeace acknowledged the profound impacts and social devastation that its campaigns had wrought on Inuit communities and issued an apology.

Nowadays one could argue that environmental NGOs are part of the policy process, but from a northern perspective the campaigns against resource harvesting are often seen as representing the interests of rich, urban, well-fed people who have destroyed their own immediate environment and now want to save others; rich people who have a secure livelihood fail to understand that other people do not. Too late, Greenpeace acknowledged the profound impacts and social devastation that its campaigns had wrought on Inuit communities and issued an apology.

The anti-trapping and anti-sealing campaigns were aimed at government regulation and prohibitions of trapping, along with some consumer diversion. The anti-logging campaigns aimed more at forestry companies and their markets, diverting retail and industrial consumers from buying BC forest products, and thus forcing the BC industry to adopt new behaviours. The campaigns are increasingly expecting to influence public resource use/policy with little government participation. NGO disillusionment with government is most pointedly reflected by the Forest Stewardship Council’s reluctance to allow governments even to be members of the Council. The preference now is clearly for market campaigns rather than multi-stakeholder processes.

Environmental organizations and AUCs reflect the opinions and values of a growing segment of western industrial society, and they have also very effectively created issues...
In purporting to promote a greater public good, AUC groups have clearly made the connection between liberal democracy and capitalism. With their ability to revert from the policy process to market campaigns, AUCs have both access to the policy network and the ability to circumvent the domestic policy processes when they are displeased, using the power of the market to achieve their ends. If AUCs can convince consumers of the rightness of their position, they do not need to work through public policy and its unappealing compromises.

Given their move beyond government to direct market influence, the evidence about constantly intensified campaign issues, and the evidence about new eco-materialist values, it seems that we may expect continuing campaigns by anti-harvesting interest groups. It may even be too late for governments and resource users to demonstrate that they can achieve sustainable utilization of resources, greater diversity of uses, and community relevance. Governments’ authority has been called into question, and community resource users have been derided, dismissed and even excluded from the policy-making process. The values implicit in anti-harvesting campaigns, and in the powers they now wield over industry and retailers may not even include continued resource use. If the Forest Stewardship Council chose to do so, it could easily declare all old-growth on the BC coast to be of high conservation value — in light of the AUCs’ claims about Clayoquot Sound and the Great Bear Rainforest — and therefore, as Stanbury points out, no coastal logging firm would be able to meet their eco-certification standards. The trappers learned this lesson earlier — it was impossible to achieve certification of humane traps because the goal posts were continuously move. BC can only hope the forest eco-certification process will avoid this.

The AUC groups have worked from a foundation of urban and eco-materialist values and in doing so the values and needs of rural and indigenous cultures are being ignored, as are the larger values of democracy and fair-dealing. The tactics used in the campaigns reflect other new values as well — greater distrust of authority and elites, greater emphasis on individualization and intangible values. Thus, the practice of international and domestic suasion regarding resource use, environmental protection and sustainability, though once in the hands of governments, is now firmly in the hands of often narrowly focused interest groups using market campaigns against their chosen targets. Unfortunately, this model of decision-making is piecemeal, ignores the wider implications and obligations of responsible multi-stakeholder decision-making and undermines the broader requirements of sustainable development — environment, economy and society.

Anti-use campaigns often raise or reflect valid concerns and consciousness, but their role in public resource decision-making needs to be moderated by a requirement for fair tactics, good science, and inclusion of all stakeholders in democratic processes. We can see an evolution of public policy-making from bilateral arrangements between industry and government, to a triad of government, industry and interest groups, or worse a new bilateral cabal of industry and interest groups. Communities and other resource users, especially if their cultures and values differ from those of the urban decision-makers, have not been reliably invited to the table, and certainly are not honestly reflected in the campaigns for sustainability.

North (as examples only) is being driven by the mores and values of people outside the region.

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