

## Nunavut wary of anti-sealing campaign

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**Northern News Services**

Ottawa (Mar 21/05) - Nunavut students confronted placard-waving anti-sealing protesters in Ottawa last week.

"We were shocked to see some people were so ignorant," said Jesse Mike, a 19-year-old student from Iqaluit who attends the Nunavut Sivuniksavut training program in Ottawa. "Some of them were aggressive, yelling, pointing fingers and making ignorant comments."

The students confronted the protesters on March 15 with placards that read, "The seal is a part of our economy."

The protest, one of many across North America, was organized by the Humane Society of the United States, along with Greenpeace, as a call for the abandonment of commercial seal hunting, mainly in Newfoundland.

"One guy asked, 'what do you find more amusing, killing the seal or eating it?'" Mike said.

Others were more understanding, she said.

"There were people saying, 'we know it's a part of your culture, but we're trying to get Newfoundlanders to stop.'"

"We told them it would affect us either way."

The latest campaign against seal hunting could spell trouble for hunters in Nunavut, the territorial environment minister said.

"Of course it's a concern," said Olayuk Akesuk. "It would hurt the hunters of Nunavut, if they were successful in banning seal skins in Canada."

While the Humane Society says it respects subsistence hunting by aboriginals, Akesuk said similar campaigns during the late 1970s and early 1980s made life difficult for Nunavut hunters.

Nunavut residents hunt between 8,000-10,000 seals a year, said Akesuk.

"We've got to educate the people in the south who are protesting against the seal industry," he said.

Hunter Louie Kamookak in Gjoa Haven agreed.

He said it's important for southern protesters to understand the differences between Inuit hunting practices and the commercial seal hunt.

"It's very important, because people use the whole seal," he said.  
"Nothing's wasted."

Seal meat becomes the main diet during winter months, when geese or caribou have migrated south.

"I know a lot of full-time hunters who depend on it for food," said Kamookak.