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# Non-violence and Activism: The Case of Greenpeace's Anti-Sealing Campaign

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ABSTRACT. This paper explores the question: What does Greenpeace's practice of non-violence during its anti-sealing campaigning reveal about the organization's relationship with the philosophy? It highlights the complexity of what non-violence is, focusing on Greenpeace's experience of navigating claims that it is a principled non-violent organization when its legacy of anti-sealing activism reveals that it is much more pragmatic than it would like the public to recognize. Using interviews and archival research, the paper unpacks Greenpeace's approach to Indigenous and non-Indigenous sealers, while it navigated its own internal tensions, inherent classism, and attitudes within the wider anti-sealing movement. It argues that Greenpeace's commitment to its reported non-violent principles and taking accountability for when it errs in its activism, really depends on whether Greenpeace can afford to ignore those they negatively impact or whether there are social, legal, and strategic factors that incentivize taking responsibility and making changes.

Keywords: Greenpeace; principled non-violence; pragmatic non-violence; anti-sealing campaigning; Inuit; Canada; Greenland

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article explore la question suivante : Que révèle la pratique de non-violence adoptée par Greenpeace durant sa campagne contre la chasse aux phoques au sujet de la relation de cet organisme avec la philosophie? Cet article met en évidence la complexité de la non-violence, en mettant l'accent sur les revendications de Greenpeace selon lesquelles il est un organisme non violent de principe, alors que son activisme contre la chasse aux phoques démontre qu'il est beaucoup plus pragmatique qu'il aimerait que le public le reconnaisse. En s'appuyant sur des entrevues et des recherches archivistiques, cet article décortique l'approche de Greenpeace vis-à-vis des chasseurs de phoques autochtones et non autochtones alors qu'il était aux prises avec ses propres tensions internes, son classisme inhérent et les attitudes en vigueur au sein du plus grand mouvement contre la chasse aux phoques. L'article soutient que l'engagement de Greenpeace envers ses principes déclarés de non-violence, ainsi que sa responsabilisation face aux erreurs commises dans son activisme, dépendent vraiment à savoir si Greenpeace peut se permettre de ne pas tenir compte des personnes et des organisations dont il affecte négativement le fonctionnement, ou à savoir si des facteurs sociaux, juridiques et stratégiques l'incitent à assumer ses responsabilités et à opérer des changements.

Mots-clés : Greenpeace; non-violence de principe; non-violence pragmatique; campagne contre la chasse aux phoques; Inuit; Canada; Groenland

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## INTRODUCTION

Many environmental- and animal-rights organizations position themselves as non-violent (e.g., Goodin, 1992; Ackerman and Kruegler, 1994; Tichelar, 2017; Greenpeace New Zealand, n.d.; PETA, n.d.; Sea Shepherd, n.d.). One of the most prominent groups to position themselves this way is Greenpeace, an organization whose name aims to reflect its commitment to green causes and peace in global affairs (Sune Scheller, pers. comm; Sini Harkki, pers comm.). With the non-violent philosophy engrained in the identity and promotion of Greenpeace since its founding in 1971, it may be surprising to learn that the organization has not always lived up to this ideal. Moreover, the organization refuses to publicly acknowledge the extent to which it betrayed one of its core principles. The organization has not made amends with those it affected despite stating that it has always been committed to "mutual trust through transparency and accountability in our interactions" and encouraging "people to develop and empower them to take risks and learn from their mistakes" (Greenpeace International, 2018:3).

At the same time, there is a lack of public awareness about Greenpeace's inconsistent application of non-violence philosophy and the scope of the fallout for people affected. As a result, there is little pressure on Greenpeace to acknowledge and address what it has done. This is probably because its most egregious behaviours, attitudes, and actions occurred while protesting the North Atlantic seal hunt in the 1970s. Seal hunting and hunters remain much maligned and stigmatized public figures in popular discourse (Allen, 1979; Harter, 2004; Dauvergne and Neville, 2011; Phelps Bondaroff and Burke, 2014; Burke, 2020a, 2021a). This paper explores the question: What does Greenpeace's practice of non-violence during its anti-sealing campaigning reveal about the organization's relationship with the philosophy? This paper highlights the pragmatic

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decisions by Greenpeace leadership in the 1970s that saw the organization shift its interpretation and application of the philosophy of non-violence toward more radical animal-rights activism. In making this shift, Greenpeace demonstrated that its organizational commitment to the ideals of principled non-violence is dubious.

Leadership in the 1970s prioritized immediate agenda successes, media popularity, and maintaining internal cohesion (during extensive infighting for ideological dominance) over upholding the belief in principled non-violence. Greenpeace leaders today find themselves hindered in ways similar to leaders in the 1970s when it comes to reconciliation, but with a compounding problem of having to maintain an international, well-established brand and legacy. Greenpeace's anti-sealing activities are viewed as a proud part of its history by many supporters and donors. This paper argues that, ultimately, whether Greenpeace does the right thing in terms of "transparency and accountability in our interactions" and learning "from their mistakes" (Greenpeace International, 2018:3) depends on whether it can risk tackling the problems or whether it can afford to ignore those they have harmed and look the other way.

## METHODS

This paper draws upon in-depth, semi-structured interviews and archival research gathered with the support of the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement (No 746312, 2018–2020) and the J.R. Smallwood Foundation for Newfoundland and Labrador Studies (2020–22). Interviews were conducted with employees of Greenpeace. Nine interviews with Greenpeace members were conducted between 2018 and 2019, and this paper reflects input from seven of them (Table 1).

The individuals interviewed and included in this paper consented to the use of their names in association with information they provided. They were selected for interviews as part of my Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship project, which focused on the role of environmental organizations in Arctic diplomacy and had a specific focus on the work of Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature. The individuals were selected because they all have connection to Greenpeace's work in the Arctic (and the North more broadly); some individuals have experience at Greenpeace's international office and offices in Canada, United States, Finland, Denmark, Russia, and the Netherlands. Please note that Greenpeace does not have separate Greenpeace Finland or Denmark chapters; offices in those locations fall under the regional entity called Greenpeace Nordic.

The archival work reflected in this paper is based on data gathered in 2020 and 2021 from holdings at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University, Newfoundland and Labrador. This data was collected as part of a research fellowship funded by the J.R. Smallwood Foundation for Newfoundland and Labrador Studies studying the impact of anti-sealing activism on rural and coastal Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples involved in the fisheries industry in that Canadian province—ground zero of the anti-sealing protests. This project focused on the height of the anti-sealing protests from 1969–1985 with a particular focus on the role of organizations such as Greenpeace and the International Fund for Animal Welfare and on the experiences had by sealers and their families. Secondary research and writing occurred while supported by a Northern Scholars Visiting Research Fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh (2022–23).

## NON-VIOLENCE

Non-violence, also referred to as non-violent action or non-violent struggle (Sharp, 2005), is a central concept in activism with "the technique of nonviolent action [being] widely used in colonial rebellions, international political and economic conflicts, religious conflicts, and anti-slavery resistance" (Sharp, 2005:4). According to Sharp (2005:7):

> [m]ethods of nonviolent action include protest marches, flying forbidden flags, massive rallies, vigils, leaflets, picketing, social boycotts, economic boycotts, labor strikes, rejection of legitimacy, civil disobedience, boycott of government positions, boycott of rigged elections, strikes by civil servants, noncooperation by police, nonobedience [*sic*] without direct supervision, mutiny, sit-ins, hunger strikes, sit-downs on the streets, establishment of alternative institutions, occupation of offices, and creation of parallel governments.

Some authors, such as Michael Randle, use the term civil resistance when referring to non-violent political action to "emphasise its character as collective action on the part of ordinary citizens or civilians, outside conventional political structures or organisations (such as political parties)" (Randle, 1994:9 in Atack, 2012:8; see also Roberts and Ash, 2009). The concept of non-violence is "more concerned with limiting and avoiding harm than in the use of force against the will of others" (Baldoli and Radaelu, 2019:1166). Ian Atack (2012:8) goes further and argues that a positive definition of non-violence involves more than "the absence of violence (negative), but also the strengthening of the capacity for popular power and popular resistance against oppression and injustice (positive)."

However, there is a tendency to sometimes limit the scope of non-violence, such as in the definition provided by Erica Chenoweth and Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham. For them, non-violent resistance is limited to mean resistance "without using or threatening physical harm against the opponent" (2013:72). This limited scope for the use of physical non-violence ignores other forms of violence, such as verbal, psychological, and cultural.

TABLE 1: Interviewees quoted in the paper.

| Names | Description |
|---|---|
| Sune Scheller | • Greenpeace Nordic, based at the Danish office<br>• works in Greenland on issues of community outreach and non-renewable resource extraction |
| Mads Flarup Christensen | • Greenpeace Nordic, based at the Danish office<br>• executive director of Greenpeace Nordic<br>• 30 years with Greenpeace |
| Sini Harkki | • Greenpeace Nordic, based at the Finnish office<br>• works with Sámi on forestry, reindeer herding, and protected areas |
| Faiza Outahsen | • Greenpeace Netherlands<br>• member of the Arctic 30 protest<br>• arrested in Russia for protesting Arctic oil production |
| Elena Sakirko | • Greenpeace Russia<br>• former translator for the Arctic 30<br>• activist working in the Russian North on issues like oil-spill clean-up, protected area preservation, supporting Indigenous rights |
| Jessica Wilson | • Greenpeace International, formerly of Greenpeace Canada<br>• worked with the Inuit community of Clyde River on its Supreme Court challenge over seismic testing for oil near the community<br>• part of the Save the Arctic team<br>• part of the team that worked on the 2014 Greenpeace Canada apology to Inuit |
| John Hocevar | • Greenpeace USA<br>• part of the global coordination team for oceans<br>• part of US Arctic/Alaska work on Shell oil exploration<br>• Arctic/Antarctic work on underwater canyon protection |

The literature on non-violence in practice, however, broadly breaks down the concept of non-violence into two components that explain the users and mindsets of individuals and organizations that identify as non-violent: principled and pragmatic (Bharadwaj, 1998; Sharp, 2005; Atack, 2012). This breakdown reflects that "[w]hat for some people is the ultimate fulfillment of a belief system is for others merely a useful technique—a means to an end" (Zelko, 2013:14). Atack (2012:9) describes the breakdown as follows:

> Pragmatic proponents of nonviolent political action use these methods, because they seem to be the most effective under the circumstances or because armed resistance or armed conflict are not realistic options. Principled proponents of nonviolence, on the other hand, attach some deeper ethical or religious significance to avoiding or replacing violence in political action and social relationships more generally.

According to Bharadwaj, the distinction between the types of non-violence is significant. In Bharadwaj's view, the "nonviolence around the world has been and is being carried out largely in the pragmatic mode … [and] the majority of followers are attracted mainly to the charisma and effectiveness of leaders and not to their commitment to principled nonviolence" (Bharadwaj, 1998:79).

Atack echoes Bharadwaj, stressing that the most iconic figures of 20th century non-violence are more aligned with principled non-violence, such as Martin Luther King (MLK) and Mahatma Gandhi (see also Sharp, 2005), whereas "the vast majority of the instances of nonviolent political action or civil resistance involve individuals or groups who are using it for pragmatic reasons" (Atack, 2012:9). The implication of most non-violence practitioners leaning toward pragmatic versus principled non-violence is that non-violence embraced on pragmatic grounds (not on truth and morality, which underpin principled non-violence) is more focused on success and power. As a result of the preoccupation on success in pragmatic non-violence, Bharadwaj (1998:80) argues, such practical applications of non-violence are "bound to lead to an opportunistic or half-hearted acceptance of nonviolence, with the result that the temptation to use other means will lead to the eventual corruption or destruction of the good end."

This opportunistic or half-hearted acceptance of non-violence in practice by the majority, as observed by Bharadwaj (1998), is due to the focus on activism outcomes and it can be seen in debate about what it means to be non-violent in activism. In his important work on nonviolence in environmental and animal-rights activism and by violence-prone environmentalists, Robert Goodin (1992:134), for example, argues that the "self-styled 'monkeywrenchers' of the American West" protested logging and claimed that their work was non-violent resistance because their activities were "not directed towards harming human beings or other forms of life" but rather "inanimate machines and tools."

Monkeywrenching is ecological sabotage or ecotage and entails "stopping environmentally destructive activities by damaging the equipment involved in the activity … to the point where the companies involved would no longer find those activities profitable enough to pursue them" (Vail and Goode, 2008:192). In theory, monkeywrenching

is presented as non-violent resistance as the activities are "not directed toward harming human beings or other forms of life" (Doyle, 2000:46). In practice, however, the monkeywrenchers also spike roads and trees and unscrew crucial bolts in machinery, which can cause enormous physical and psychological harm to sawyers and millers by potentially causing life-threatening and life-altering injuries if, for example, machinery malfunctions or a saw hits a spike in a tree (Goodin, 1992). Activists and organizations who participated in monkeywrenching—most notably Earth First! who popularized the technique in the 1980s—have since been labeled as radical and as eco-terrorists (Vail and Goode, 2008).

Part of the rationale behind an environmental organization, or any NGO, aligning itself with the concept of non-violence (beyond a basic belief in the principle) is that the concept has status by virtue of its affiliation with key figures and causes in society that are seen as moral and upstanding, such as Gandhi, MLK, and civil rights activism. NGOs that claim to adhere to non-violence may want to be seen in the tradition of such exalted figures and efforts and want to inhabit the kind of moral legitimacy these actors possess (Baur and Palazzo, 2011; Marberg et al., 2016).

Liu et al. (2013:635) had the following to say:

> Moral legitimacy is socially constructed by giving and considering the reasons for justifying certain actions, practices, or institutions … [A]udiences can assess an organization's moral legitimacy by evaluating … outputs and consequences (doing the rights things), techniques and procedures (doing things rights), categories and structures (the right organisation for the job), and leaders and representatives (the right person in charge of the tasks).

A real or perceived lack of moral legitimacy is a worry for NGOs because a lack of moral legitimacy undermines their traditional role of pointing out problems in society and giving a voice to the marginalized (Puljek-Shank, 2019). For an organization that has tied its identity and campaigning to non-violence, for example, the betrayal of the philosophy (and subsequent public awareness of the betrayal) may undermine perceptions of its moral legitimacy and therefore its right to claim to be able to act on behalf of others on a given subject or issue.

## GREENPEACE AND ANTI-SEALING ACTIVISM: A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Greenpeace was formed in Vancouver, Canada, in 1971, and was initially known as the Don't Make a Wave Committee. Greenpeace framed itself as part of "a broader history of global protest and activism that includes anticolonial struggles" (Zelko, 2013:10). It started as a small group of like-minded individuals concerned about ecological destruction and nuclear bombs. The group's first coordinated work was against nuclear testing plans by the United States government at Amchitka Island, Alaska (Greenpeace New Zealand, n.d.; Carter, 2001:; also see Carter, 2007). Its creation was inspired by Quakers (Weyler, 2021) and their idea of putting "faith into action, trying to change the world using nonviolent methods" by using protests, such as marches, demonstrations, and non-violent direct action to express dissent and raise awareness about issues (Robertson, 2021:1). Greenpeace claims to combine the Quaker notion of bearing witness and "the Gandhian nonviolent protest strategies employed by the peace and civil rights movements," together with a media strategy and an emphasis on a romanticism of the natural world that lacks borders (Zelko, 2013: 4). But while Quaker non-violence is rooted in the religion's pacifism, "[n]onviolent action … is not synonymous with pacifism … not all nonviolent protestors are pacifists" (Zelko, 2013:13).

The imagery and narrative of the handful of early Greenpeace activists going up against the American government cemented the organization's self-described image of representing small players taking on big actors and winning: David versus Goliath (Weyler, 2004; Wang, 2010). By 1976, the Don't Make a Wave Committee was calling itself Greenpeace and it transitioned from a group focused on a single cause (nuclear testing) to an organization seeking to identify and move against a range of actors on different environmental- and animal-rights issues (Weyler, 2004).

The issue of seal hunting became one of its first post-Amchitka focus areas. Initially, Greenpeace sought to partner with sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador (which had joined Canada in 1949). It publicly recognized the culturally distinct and close relationships that Newfoundland and Labrador's peoples and Inuit have with seal hunting and associated practices, and early protests predominately focused on foreign overhunting (Burke, 2020a).

> The fact is that the commercial fleets owned by Norwegian companies are wiping out the seal herds. The fact is the Norwegians destroyed three great herds of seals prior to starting on the Labrador herds in 1947. The fact is that the commercial fleets take only the pelts, leaving the meat on the ice, while the fishermen and [Inuit] of Newfoundland and Labrador do eat the meat. With a conservation stand the seals could have a chance.
>
> Greenpeace Chronicles, 1976:6, as quoted in Harter, 2004.

Greenpeace pursued an alliance with the Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers Union who represented sealers/fishers in 1976 "against the large factory ships as the locals found the large hauls of the sealing ships a threat to their hunt" (Harter, 2004:93).

But, according to Frank Zelko (2013:8), "the antisealing [*sic*] protests attracted a substantial number of animal-rights activists to Greenpeace. From an animal-rights

perspective, there can be no question of compromise when it comes to the killing of whales or seals—abolition is the only goal worth pursuing." As a result, by 1977, Greenpeace betrayed their local ally and made its members their primary target for their campaign, moving to call for an end of all sealing (Patey, 1990; Burke, 2023a). At this point, Greenpeace framed seal hunting as "ecologically destructive and morally reprehensible acts that represented humanity's ignorance and thoughtless cruelty toward other sentient life-forms" (Zelko, 2013:4).

The coordinated move against seal hunting was initially spearheaded by Brian Davis and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) circa 1969 (Woods, 1986), but Greenpeace emerged as one of the defining organizations associated with the sealing protests (Kalland, 2009; Phelps Bondaroff and Burke, 2014; Burke, 2023b). Greenpeace was a key actor in shaping the media narrative landscape, with their creative and selective use of image and media events, aided by the dawn of colour television (Kalland, 2009). Documentary filmmaker Anne Troake observed that "[a]nti-sealing [messaging] depends almost entirely on the visual particulars of the hunt … [T]hrough moving images on screens, the conditions for the anti-sealing industry to spin stories about rural people and our way of life were established" (Burke, 2023b:108). For its part, Greenpeace rarely distributed images that showed the negative local experience that resulted from activist campaigning (Kalland, 2009). The organization has since faced criticism for its "[s]kilful manipulation of the mass media [which] engender[ed] enormous sympathy for their cause" through selective editing (Kalland, 2009:82), and which did not always accurately portray events as they actually unfolded. But in the 1970s in particular, Greenpeace was instrumental in helping to define what people (to this day) think they know about seal hunting—how it is conducted and by whom—and why it is largely considered wrong.

Ultimately, however, Greenpeace's messaging and behavioural inconsistency toward sealing and sealers from 1976 onward are probably the by-product of internal power struggles and class-politics issues in the organization, which affected how non-violence was interpreted and put into practice. At that time, Greenpeace was still loosely formed, was not a professional entity, and was taking an ad hoc approach to campaigning as it progressed and as its leaders tried to nail down the organization's identity and ways of operating (Carter, 2007). In its early years, the organization's anti-sealing activism was strongly driven by the personalities and interests of leaders such as Bob Hunter, Paul Watson, David McTaggard, and Patrick Moore and by their respective interpretations of human–nature co-existence, the role of science in activism, and the use of the media and campaigning tactics (Weyler, 2004).

Rex Weyler, co-founder of Greenpeace International and director of the original Greenpeace Foundation that preceded it, states that Hunter, who was the president of Greenpeace at that time, "held the[organization] factions together with a force of his zany charisma" (2004:351), but was arguably less politically and strategically savvy than Watson, McTaggard, and Moore. Hunter reportedly "made a concerted effort to work with the mostly impoverished Newfoundlanders who constituted the sealing industry's labor force" (Zelko, 2013:9), but Hunter was a "[p]olitical pushover for tough advocates like Watson, McTaggard, or Moore who could convince him of the merits of almost any plan" (Weyler, 2004:351).

At the time, "those within Greenpeace who were willing to take a more pragmatic, ecological approach to sealing found that they had almost as much trouble with some of their own supporters as they did with the sealers" (Zelko, 2013:8). Watson represented the "nature extremes of the environmental movement," and Moore represented a more scientific approach toward issues of environmental protection (Weyler, 2004:351; for more on Weyler's Greenpeace credentials see Greenpeace International, 2024). The push-pull for dominance in the organization between a focus on animal rights versus an emphasis on environmentalism/ecology persisted into the late 1970s during the organization's campaigning against sealing and is observable in its interpretation of non-violence.

On top of the internal struggles for ideological supremacy, class issues dominated the sealing debate and how local peoples were perceived, judged, and tolerated by activists and their supporters (Burke, 2023a, 2023b). Zelko (2013:242), in *Make it a Green Peace: The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism* had the following to say:

> [W]here native hunting practices were ennobled by thousand-year traditions and deep cultural and mythological connections to their prey, the swilers [sealers] were just poor white folk who clubbed seals for the international fur trade. In reality, Indigenous sealing and swiling [sealing] were much more similar than many would care to admit.

Even with the gradual popularization of a narrow interpretation of Indigenous exceptionalism by many environmental- and animal-rights activists in the sealing debate (Burke, 2023a), it took a decade for Greenpeace to get the message that its sealing activism was harming Indigenous Peoples (Woods, 1986). Greenpeace eventually stopped actively campaigning against sealing in 1985 in response to appeals from Indigenous Survival International (ISI) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF, now known as the World Wide Fund for Nature) "to honour the commitment to aboriginal peoples that was part of Greenpeace's founding philosophy" (Woods, 1986:6).

Ultimately, the late 1970s and 1980s were a time of rapid growth and change for Greenpeace, and the "growth rate of Greenpeace had far outstripped our ability to organize ourselves politically" (Weyler, 2004:524). By 1978, the organization was fractured; the Canadian branch of Greenpeace was reportedly experiencing financial difficulties due to years of campaigning, but the American

arm—particularly out of California—was profitable and more interested in stopping all sealing (Zelko, 2013). According to Paul Watson, anti-seal campaigning was highly lucrative for Greenpeace; he noted that in 1978, "a dozen people this year from Greenpeace California, I mean they're coming from the highest standard of living region in North America, they're travelling to the place with the lowest income per year on this continent telling them not to kill seals because they're cute. But they're not an endangered species" (CBC, 1978).

In an interview with CBC's Barbara Frum in 1978, Watson (CBC, 1978) replied to a question about raising money against the seal hunt:

> Well, I think that of all the animals in the world or any environmental problem in the world, the harp seal is the easiest issue to raise funds on. Greenpeace has always managed to raise more money on the seal issue for campaigns than has actually been spent on the campaigns themselves. The seal hunt has always turned a profit for the Greenpeace Foundation. And then other organisations like IFAW, API, Fund for Animals, also make a profit off the seal hunt.

When pushed by Frum about whether the fight for seals was motivated by profit, Watson replied, "definitely because it's easier to make money and because it does make a profit. There are over a thousand animals on the endangered species list, and the harp seal isn't one of them" acknowledging that conservation was not the primary motivating factor behind Greenpeace's activism at that time, nor that of other organizations; rather money drove the scale and severity of anti-sealing protesting. When Frum pushed again for explicit confirmation as to whether anyone from "Greenpeace ever expressed that aloud, that it was easy to make some hay, some money, on the seal hunt so let's get into that?" Watson stated, "Well, a lot of people have done that. See, the thing is, the seal is very easy to exploit as an image" (CBC 1978; also see Zelko, 2013 for more on the Greenpeace's financial pressures in the late 1970s and their impact on agenda setting).

Ultimately, the campaigning against sealing—and the local peoples and communities associated with it—were caught up in Greenpeace's internal battles (over dominance, financial difficulties, and disorganization) and subjected to the inherent class politics that dominated the sense of moral superiority activists and their supporters had toward working-class fishers and Indigenous Peoples. By the 1990s, Greenpeace had transformed from an ad hoc radical activist group into a more professional organization, with clearly defined structures, campaigning approaches, and training for its activists (Carter, 2007). Several key leaders during the anti-sealing protests, such as Paul Watson and Patrick Moore, were expelled from the organization by this time (Burke, 2023a). However, Greenpeace continues to ground its identity and legitimacy as a global player on its claims to be a non-violent organization and on its early, more radical, activism, which gained it a large following. As of 2010, Greenpeace has approximately 2.8 million supporters globally and is present in more than 40 countries (Wang, 2010).

## GREENPEACE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR SEALERS

Sharp (2005:8) states that non-violence is "identified by what people do, not by what they believe." In the case of Greenpeace, this paper argues that during its anti-sealing protests, it did not live up to its own values and it violated its non-violence philosophy for pragmatic reasons. Specifically, Greenpeace did not live up to its belief in "peaceful, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and develop solutions for [a] green and peaceful future" (Greenpeace International, n.d.) and it violated its own code of conduct based on key principles, such as personal responsibility and non-violence, promotion of solutions, commitment and professionalism, trust and respect, and valuing people (Greenpeace International, 2018).

> Despite Greenpeace's own principles including the promotion of solutions, it did not offer any viable options to the rural people, with dependents, limited occupational mobility and minimal education who were stigmatized and left behind once Greenpeace and its activist allies and other participants in the movement successfully gutted much of the remaining economic potential of the sealing industry. Stopping sealing was half a plan. There is no evidence that Greenpeace had a long-term plan, developed with local people, to help them transition their economy away from sealing and mitigate the cultural impact of the loss of a way of life and income if it was successful in curtailing the sealing industry.
>
> Burke, 2021a:180

Greenpeace's stance of non-violence is therefore questionable in light of actions taken and encouraged by its members and supporters (and those of the anti-sealing movement), as well as the subsequent decision by Greenpeace leadership not to address or redress the organization's harmful actions and help those they intentionally and unintentionally hurt.

Notably, two 1977 situations involving Greenpeace stand out for their violation of Greenpeace's self-proclaimed non-violence stance and for its unwillingness, then and to this day, to publicly acknowledge and apologize to the people targeted during its anti-sealing activism. Those two instances are: (1) Greenpeace protesters reportedly holding a sealer hostage and psychologically tormenting them under life-threatening conditions and (2) the conduct of Paul Watson while a leader in Greenpeace.

When Greenpeace first engaged on the sealing issue, its goals were supposedly focused on the conservation

and sustainability of the seal herd, which led it to seek and forge an alliance with Newfoundland and Labrador sealers (Harter, 2004; see also Greenpeace Chronicles, 1976; CBC Radio, 1993). However, as previously stated, the alliance quickly fell apart, reflecting Greenpeace's own internal struggle to decide what it represented and wanted to achieve. Zelko argues that the more ecologically focused Bob Hunter and his supporters failed to define Greenpeace's anti-sealing agenda and maintain support for Newfoundland sealers during its internal fighting in 1976–77, "due as much to the intransigence of the sealers and their supporters within the Canadian government as to Greenpeace's own shortcomings" (2013:9), but this stance is problematic.

In effect, Zelko's account of Greenpeace's departure from its Quaker roots puts blame on the people it targeted—which has the unfortunate air of a they-were-asking-for-it argument—redirecting attention from Greenpeace's decision to invite itself into an issue (and undertake a prominent role in a campaign). This, while the organization was fractured internally and making inconsistent decisions that resulted in serious, irreparable harm to communities and cultures, a realization partially acknowledged in 2014 by Greenpeace Canada's apology to Inuit and, to a lesser extent, other affected Indigenous and coastal peoples, for its anti-sealing campaigning (Kerr, 2014).

The fact is that Greenpeace, as Zelko correctly points out, "would attract an array of supporters, from hardcore animal-rights activists to naked political opportunists, each with their own view of how campaigns should be run, why seals should be saved and who, if anyone, should be allowed to hunt them" (2013:232). In the 1970s, Greenpeace was heavily influenced by Paul Watson and the animal-rights diaspora within its ranks. It was under Watson's direction that Greenpeace abandoned rural Newfoundland and Labrador sealers "for tactical reasons" (Dale, 1996:91) and quickly targeted its former allies as it worked to end all sealing in ways that stretched Greenpeace's relationship with the concept of non-violence (Zelko, 2013:232).

In the pursuit of the anti-sealing agenda, Burke (2020a:3) states:

> [r]ural-based sealers were disadvantaged in the fight, caught unaware, and unprotected while trying to practice traditional lifestyles. Inuit and other Indigenous hunters (such as the Innu and Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland and Labrador) got caught in the attack by actors that did not bother to learn the nuances of the societies they were targeting or how, and to what extent, they participated in traditional sealing practices and the sealing economy.

Harry Roswell was a veterinary pathologist who observed the activities and practices of the seal hunt in 1977 and 1978 for the Committee on Seals and Sealing in Canada (Roswell, 1977, 1978). According to his reports from those years, Watson's activities in 1977 and the activities of those he led on the ice for Greenpeace created situations that Roswell observed "were nothing short of bullying, intimidation, hostage taking and physical and psychology harassment" (Burke, 2021a:178).

Zelko contends that Watson and fellow Greenpeace member Walrus Oakenbough urged Greenpeace to become more confrontational toward Newfoundlander and Labradorian and Quebecois sealers. They pushed Greenpeace firmly toward an animal-rights stance on sealing: it was a fight to stop extinction, "brutality, blood, and death" at the hands of sealers who were framed as "colder than the ice upon which they trod" (Zelko, 2013:236). Under Watson and his supporters, Greenpeace members participated in monkeywrenching activities such as deliberately destroying the equipment of sealers (including hakapiks, which are used for both hunting and safety) and throwing pelts already gathered into the water (Patey, 1990). The organization also found itself "pitted against rural working-class or Indigenous people struggling to make a living" (Zelko, 2013:232), inverting the David versus Goliath dynamic that had framed Greenpeace positively in Amchitka against the United States government; Greenpeace now operated as the giant in the scenario, attacking isolated working-class people.

The inverted David versus Goliath dynamic played out, for example, when Greenpeace members kept a Newfoundland sealer hostage on a moving ice pan while verbally abusing and intimidating him. During the hunt between 16 March and 19 March 1977, Roswell (Roswell, 1977:25) reported the following:

> four of them [Greenpeace members] surrounded a sealer and refused to let him move from the pan. This intimidation can only be considered as bullying. In spite of the intimidation, the harassment and the provocation, the Newfoundland sealer did not strike out against Greenpeace members or attempt to take any form of defensive action. This type of conduct must receive the commendation of the people of Canada as one of the few of them, placed in a similar circumstance, [who] would exercise [such restraint].

This Greenpeace direct action occurred in dangerous conditions on moving, fragmented ice sheets in sub-zero temperatures. It put the sealer at risk of injury or death as the frequently slippery, uneven ice pans move freely and without notice; it is not unheard of for a sealer to slip into the water and become trapped under the moving ice.

During the same time period, Watson, who participated in and led the direct action for Greenpeace on the ice during the 1977 protests, reportedly "faked being paralyzed after a direct action stunt he instigated caused an accident" (Burke, 2021a:178). Watson, who had connected himself to pelts being raised onto a vessel via a winch, was mistakenly dropped, which caused much distress to the winch operator who feared they had killed or permanently maimed him. Using the concern of the vessel's crew, Watson claimed

to be paralyzed to gain access to the vessel for medical help, and once onboard he began to walk around and taunt the sealers with threats of legal action (Rowsell, 1977). Watson recounts the experience as non-violent intervention (Essemlali and Watson, 2013; see also Weyler, 2004).

The psychological torment reportedly experienced by the vessel's crew as a result of Watson's stunt and the actions of the four Greenpeace protesters that isolated and prevented the sealer from moving from the ice sheet fall within a grey area when discussing non-violent direct action. On the one hand, if non-violence is interpreted as allowing indirect physical violence against others, then Watson's activities and those of the other Greenpeace campaigners could be interpreted as non-violent. However, the meaning of non-violence gets stretched to the point of unrecognition when safety equipment is destroyed, psychological torment is inflicted on people, and working conditions are made unsafe.

It is not clear in the scholarship on pragmatic non-violence when an action using "techniques of struggle" such as "the use of psychological, social, economic, and political power in the matching of forces in conflict" (Sharp, 2005:10) moves from non-violent to violent. But it is reasonable to conclude that when the conflict has such disparity between the sides that the targets of the techniques are incapable of mounting any reasonable defence and are incapable of leaving a situation, the action is violent. In 1977, the same year of the Watson-led direct action, Greenpeace produced a report that showed that the organization knew the people they targeted in its campaigning were defenceless against them. Their report states that Greenpeace knew many of the people participating in seal harvesting had "3.5 dependents, [and] an average education of grade 9, [and were] living in isolated communities with limited occupational mobility" (Greenpeace Foundation, 1977:2). While the grade nine education statistic is representative of formal education and fails to account for the substantial non-school-based knowledge of many fishers who are experts in their field, the overall quote does illustrate that Greenpeace knew that their primary targets were extremely vulnerable socially, economically, and situationally—and yet the organization set out to capitalize on their vulnerability.

Watson was, and still is, a charismatic leader (see Bharadwaj [1998] on the influence of charismatic leaders on practices of pragmatic non-violence). Greenpeace as an organization struggled with Watson's application of his personal interpretation of non-violence on behalf of the organization. After the 1977 seal protests, the organization's leadership acted to remove Watson from the organization, seeing him as a liability. Weyler, a member of Greenpeace during that era, notes that "Watson tended to push the end of non-violence" and his actions and understanding of non-violence undermined Greenpeace's presentation of itself as a non-violent organization (Weyler, 2004:457). However, even though it removed Watson, Greenpeace did not apologize to the people that he and the other Greenpeace campaigners had targeted, nor did it publicly inform its followers that such conduct was not in keeping with Greenpeace's understanding of non-violence. Instead, it expelled Watson and made modest modifications in how it conducted direct action the following year. It did not stop its campaigning (Roswell, 1978).

Despite aligning itself with principled non-violence, the handling of the direct action against rural sealers in 1977 illustrates that ultimately the Greenpeace leadership of the time was more pragmatic than principled on the issue of targeting rural sealers. The current leadership of the organization is equally pragmatic, despite the organization's marketing materials. The outcomes from the 1977 direct action brought Greenpeace increasing notoriety, media coverage, and funding for its anti-sealing agenda and other activities (CBC, 1978; Patey, 1990; Harter, 2004). Ultimately, an apology would probably have interrupted the momentum of Greenpeace's cause.

## INUIT AND INDIGENOUS INROADS AND THE CHALLENGES OF SEALING APOLOGIES

States are not the only actors that exhibit colonial attitudes, thinking, and behaviours. A more contemporary iteration of colonization is observable in social movements and environmental- and animal-rights activism (Rodgers and Ingram, 2019; Burke, 2023a). Despite assertions that "Greenpeace has never lost sight of the longstanding presence of Indigenous peoples, in Canada or anywhere else" (Rodgers and Ingram, 2019:16), when Greenpeace and other anti-sealing protest organizations started calling for an end to all seal hunting, little attention was given to the role of seal hunting in various Indigenous cultures and communities in the Arctic and sub-Arctic (Woods, 1986; Phelps Bondaroff and Burke, 2014). This ignorance about Indigenous Peoples involved in sealing can be attributed to the persistence of "the idea of the pristine … Instead of seeing the Arctic as a lived-in space and homeland, it is portrayed as an empty space" that appears frequently in environmental- and animal-rights activism and discourse (Burke, 2020b:261). Indigenous Peoples across Canada and Greenland, in particular, were severely impacted by the economic collapse of the sealing industry (Woods, 1986; Burke, 2020a).

Anti-sealing campaigning, however, persists despite Greenpeace's formal withdrawal from the anti-sealing cause in 1985. Greenpeace helped to define global perception of sealing. In 2017, Inuk pro-sealing activist Aaju Peter spoke out against anti-sealing activist organizations, saying that their actions have created "a bad taste and a bad image" about seal hunting and products because their materials mislead and promote a negative stereotype of the industry, most notably the idea that baby seals are slaughtered. Peter argues that "[t]hey're not babies. Human beings have babies" (CBC News 2017), but the baby-seal trope remains prevalent in anti-sealing narratives. Greenpeace helped to define the trope as representative of

the entire sealing industry with its use of early media events and campaigning materials and messaging. Leading Inuit activists are open about their view "that any opposition to the seal hunt, commercial or otherwise, harms Inuit by destroying the market for seal furs," which undermines sustainable economic prospects in many Inuit communities (Canadian Press, 2014).

Furthermore, the idea that seals are endangered and that hunting is unsustainable and cruel remains a common message in anti-sealing activism and it is a message that Greenpeace was instrumental in popularizing. Organizations such as the IFAW and the Humane Society persist in equating current seal populations and hunting methods with conditions that instigated protests in the 1960s and 1970s (Burke, 2023a). This is another point in the sealing debate that Inuit object to. In 2010, then-Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) President Mary Simon said, "No objective and fair minded person can conclude that seals are under genuine conservation threat or that Inuit hunting activities are less humane than those practiced by hunting communities all over the world, including hunters in Europe" (Phillips, 2010).

Just as the state of seal populations today are not as they were in the 1970s, Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples in Canada and Greenland, for example, are also in a different position today, which affects the activism landscape considerably for organizations like Greenpeace (Burke, 2020a). The devolution of powers to Indigenous Peoples through self-governing agreements and legal developments is leading to the empowerment of Inuit and changes in the governance of Inuit-led jurisdictions (e.g., Phillips, 2010; Loukacheva, 2012; Kuokkanen, 2017; Rodon, 2017; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2019; Hofverberg, 2019). These governance and legal changes are coinciding with societal changes that call for acknowledgement of past harms to Indigenous Peoples because of colonialism and its incarnations, and for the need to include Indigenous Peoples in issues and decision-making that impact their lives and homelands (e.g., Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2013; Kuokkanen, 2017; Rodon, 2017; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2022).

Parallel with the time frame of changing power structures and societal attitudes, Greenpeace has turned its focus to the polar regions as part of its climate change and ecosystem protection work, now focusing on the oil and gas industries (Burke, 2020a). According to Warren Bernauer (2020), there is an irony in how Greenpeace and the environmental movement both undermined the sealing industry and now want to prevent oil and gas exploration in the Arctic. But Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian North are increasingly in control of economic development today, including the extractive industries (mining, oil and gas), and are trying to balance environmental conservation interests with economic development opportunities (Bernauer and Roth, 2021). This balancing act between conservation and development for northern Indigenous Peoples is happening against a backdrop where renewable, sustainable opportunities for income were rendered less economically viable by the same activists that now want Indigenous Peoples to restrict non-renewable development opportunities. Bernauer states that "large environmental organizations like Greenpeace, contributed to the decline of Inuit subsistence economies by destroying the international market for Inuit sealskins … [causing] Inuit to become increasingly dependent on wage labour to meet their material needs" (2020:490). As a result of the shift to the wage economy, Inuit are now open to considering oil and gas extraction opportunities. Bernauer (2020:499) states:

> At the same time, the anti-sealing campaign, then led by environmental organizations like Greenpeace, created an effective (if unwitting) "stick" by destroying the market for sealskins and intensifying Inuit dependence on wage labour in extractive industries. One of the great ironies of Arctic politics is surely that Greenpeace, the organization currently most associated with the fight against Arctic oil and gas extraction, played an important role in persuading Inuit to consent to oil and gas extraction.

Now, Greenpeace, in its efforts to protect Arctic ecosystems, must interact with Inuit but their reputation with the Inuit is poor as a result of the anti-sealing legacy (Woods, 1986; Burke, 2020a).

From public opinion and policy-making perspectives, legitimacy to operate in the Arctic increasingly requires Indigenous participation, inclusion, and leadership as rightsholders. Greenpeace would be unlikely to make any substantial, positive advancement of its agenda in the Arctic on issues of resource extraction, for example, without on-the-ground, local, and Indigenous consultation and participation. But as Jessica Wilson has observed, "I don't think we can understate the depth of the hatred and resentment between Inuit and Greenpeace" (pers. comm.).

Furthermore, Greenpeace as an environmental organization must also navigate the links between colonialism and approaches and attitudes within the environmental and animal-rights movements (e.g., van Holstein and Head, 2018; Bernauer, 2020; Erickson, 2020). To some extent, acknowledgement of ingrained colonialist attitudes appears to be happening. As Sini Harkki noted: "The whole root of nature conservation always had colonial features to say the least, so I think that it's very understandable that this past is still on peoples' minds" (pers. comm.). Mads Flarup Christensen observed, too, that there can be a tension when navigating potential colonial features of environmentalism: "Everyone who works with these issues understands that that [balancing agenda pursuits with possible colonial perceptions and undertones] is a tension. It is a tension with no easy answer to it" (pers. comm.).

In 2014, Greenpeace's Canadian office stepped up to offer an apology to Inuit in Canada for the organization's

anti-sealing campaigning and the attitudes and actions based on colonial thinking that spurred the anti-sealing movement (Kerr, 2014). Notably, however, Greenpeace never campaigned directly against Inuit traditional hunting; rather, the organization neglected to acknowledge Indigenous Peoples in the sealing debate or to make distinctions between types of hunting or to account for Indigenous rights when calling for an outright ban on commercial sealing. But Greenpeace's efforts against sealing, and its neglect to notice or highlight Indigenous Peoples and rights, contributed to hardship experienced by Inuit (Kerr, 2014), such as substantial economic loss from the stigmatization of sealing and seal products leading to the collapse of prices for seal pelts (Woods, 1986; Bernauer, 2020). The 2014 apology reflects some effort by Greenpeace to shift its relationship with Indigenous Peoples, most notably demonstrated through the organization's establishment of an Indigenous Peoples Policy (Greenpeace USA, n.d.).

At the same time, however, Greenpeace's effort to apologize to, and build bridges with, Inuit is an internally sensitive subject for the organization and its supporters. In 2010 and 2011, for example, Jon Burgwald of Greenpeace Nordic (Denmark) worked to re-establish local public dialogue between Greenpeace and the people of Greenland (who are overwhelmingly Inuit). In recognition of the negative legacy that Greenpeace has with the Greenlandic Inuit population as a result of its anti-sealing activism, Burgwald wore a sealskin vest to signal his, and Greenpeace's, support for Inuit subsistence hunting. He also did a media interview criticizing Sea Shepherd (an organization Paul Watson established after his expulsion from Greenpeace) and its continued stance against sealing. This public outreach effort and expression of support for Inuit rights was positively received in Greenland, but did not go down well in mainland Europe (Burke, 2020a).

According to Faiza Outahsen of Greenpeace Netherlands, "[Jon Burgwald] was … called out here internally, but Jon also had a very difficult time and encountered a lot of emotions"; local people threw rocks and eggs at him when he was in Nuuk, Greenland (pers. comm.). Outahsen went on to reflect that "[t]he whole seal thing it did also gain attention, why is someone from Greenpeace wearing sealskin? Obviously a lot of people that support us … because of the seal campaign so this is why it is something that you have to explain in your position because it is very much about the industrial type of, and not what the Indigenous communities do in a sustainable way" (pers. comm.).

Greenpeace's internal tensions arising from efforts by parts of the organization operating in Canada and Greenland to acknowledge Inuit sealing rights reflect an uncomfortable reality for some base supporters and offices outside of the Arctic region (Burke, 2020a). On the one hand, there is a desire to support Indigenous Peoples and acknowledge and address the colonial legacy of environmentalism, of which Greenpeace and its anti-sealing work is a part (Kerr, 2014). As Mads Flarup Christensen reflected: "We have quite good principles and policies in place when it comes to what, in the ways we work with these, what special rights we think Indigenous peoples have, that perhaps we don't recognize elsewhere" (pers. comm.).

On the other hand, supporting Inuit hunting means that seals are going to die—and that is an unpopular outcome for some people who support Greenpeace. As Outahsen noted about the lack of understanding on the sealing issue and what it means to local sealers versus to an urban Western-European audience: "[O]ne [Dutch] journalist that didn't really know of the whole history, which obviously a lot of people don't really know, right [came across Burgwald's media event with the sealskin vest]. Indigenous People know it and maybe some people that work there for the government, but a Dutch journalist there has no clue and thinks 'What! They are in favour of fur!'" (pers. comm.). Ultimately, the Dutch journalist's reaction reflects the reaction of the general Greenpeace supporter base.

More than 45 years after Greenpeace started protesting against seal hunting, some members of the organization in offices in Canada and the Nordic region recognize that more should be done to address the organization's problematic conduct during its anti-sealing campaigning (Kerr, 2014; Burke, 2020a; Jessica Wilson, pers. comm.). This self-reflection is happening against a backdrop of substantial and ongoing changes in the governance structures and norms of the Canadian and Greenlandic Arctic. Greenpeace has demonstrated that it wants to make some steps to address its past mistakes with regard to harming Inuit through its anti-sealing campaigning, but at the same time, the "reality is that Greenpeace cannot avoid the legacy of the anti-sealing campaign: it is both a triumph and a stigma-causing event simultaneously. It all depends on the audience" (Burke, 2020a:8). While the Inuit take issue with Greenpeace's anti-sealing legacy, many donors and members of the organization are proud of it and take serious issue when the organization is perceived to be changing its stance on seal hunting and on its own historic activities.

As a result, Greenpeace's self-reflection appears to be contained within the parameters of traditional hunting, as articulated by Greenpeace Canada's 2014 apology (Kerr, 2014). But the result is that Greenpeace, and other organizations with a similar Indigenous traditional subsistence hunting stance, are "creating a moral grey zone … activists have pigeon-holed Indigenous Peoples into a narrow frame of acceptable sealing … [that] reinforce a moralistic cage around sealing by Indigenous nations by setting artificial boundaries to inhibit Indigenous Peoples through public narratives and creative messaging campaigns" (Burke, 2023a:52).

Still, Greenpeace's small steps toward making amends for its anti-sealing legacy have not gone unnoticed. In fact, they helped to build some bridges with Inuit in Canada, most notably with Mayor Jerry Natanine of

Kanngiqtugaapik/Clyde River (Rodgers and Ingram, 2019). Natanine said that for many years his view of Greenpeace was that "they were the enemy" (Burke, 2021b), but he saw Greenpeace's 2014 apology as an opening. He and his community were trying to fight the Government of Canada over approval for seismic testing/blasting near his community, but were unable to get any help from organizations such as Oceans North, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and Qikiqtani Inuit Association. The apology inspired him to reach out to Greenpeace for help despite its anti-sealing legacy (Burke, 2021b). Greenpeace Canada and Kanngiqtugaapik/Clyde River went on to form a successful alliance, culminating in a Supreme Court of Canada ruling in 2017 siding with Kanngiqtugaapik/Clyde River, halting the seismic testing plans on the basis of a failure in the government's responsibility to adequately consult local rightsholders and uphold Inuit treaty rights (Supreme Court Judgments, 2017).

## GREENPEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE: A FOUNDING PRINCIPLE

Greenpeace is an organization that identifies itself with principled non-violence, connecting its own understanding and practice of the concept to proponents such as Gandhi (Baldoli and Radaelli, 2019). Greenpeace Canada, for example, connects Gandhi to Greenpeace's understanding of non-violence on its website. The "Protesting Peacefully, to Change the World" page, tells the story of Gandhi marching with tens of thousands to help India throw "off the chains of British rule" before proceeding to talk about Greenpeace's non-violent direct action (Greenpeace Canada, 2022).

For Greenpeace, the idea that the organization has always been connected to the non-violence philosophy is paramount to who the organization, its employees, and its supporters think they are as Greenpeace (Zelko, 2013). This is stressed on the Greenpeace UK website, for example, which notes that their direct action is not just non-violent but peaceful, stating "[t]aking peaceful, non-violent direct action has always been at the heart of Greenpeace's work" (Greenpeace UK, n.d.). Backing up the claims that the use of non-violence is core to Greenpeace's identity and way of operating, Greenpeace Canada stresses that "[t]hose taking part in non-violent direct actions show their respect for the rule of law by taking full responsibility for their actions," although this stance does not appear to be retroactive to the 1970s (bold text in the original, Greenpeace Canada, 2022).

The centrality of non-violence in the organization's identity is evident. Greenpeace's origin story is about the bringing together of green thought and peacefulness (Greenpeace UK, n.d.). Greenpeace's connection to non-violence was also stressed by representatives I spoke to, who reference the organization's duality as grounded in green thought and peace. Sune Scheller of Greenpeace Nordic (Denmark) commented that, "you know it's like you have Greenpeace and it's two words, the green part and the peace part. The peace part is a more social, society wide thing, whereas the green part is the environmental part" (pers. comm.). Sini Harkki of Greenpeace Nordic (Finland) also highlighted the duality of the Greenpeace identity, saying: "[W]hat makes us a little bit different from the traditional nature conservation movement that has this colonial background is that we've had 'peace' as the second part of our name from the start. I think being against wars and for human rights has been in our DNA from the start" (pers. comm.).

And yet, it was also observed that the green side of the organization tends to dominate the peace element. Sune Scheller commented that: "I think the peace part is maybe not taking up as much space in Greenpeace as it has done in the past" (pers. comm.). Sini Harkki (pers. comm.) also noted the following:

> I think the early 2000s we definitely did less of the peace element and it maybe had natural reasons because we work so much on disarmament and nuclear weapons and some steps were taken and some of the most acute threats were no longer there. Then it was maybe natural to down-prioritize that. But then I think that when strong currents against civil rights arose from different parts of the planet it became clear that we needed to strength that side again [the peace side].

The balancing act and tensions between the green and peace parts of the Greenpeace identity goes back to the early years of the organization and the internal power struggles among early leaders seeking to define the organization's agenda and way of actualizing it.

When a small group of people initially focused on the single-issue campaign against nuclear testing in Alaska in the early 1970s, the group was united (Weyler, 2004). But when the leaders moved into the sealing protests in the mid- to late 1970s, the challenges and misalignment with internal green and peace interpretations became evident (Weyler, 2004; also see Burke, 2021a). As Jessica Wilson of Greenpeace International, and formerly of Greenpeace Canada, reflected: "Paul Watson … and Bob Hunter at the time were the de facto leaders of Greenpeace and they started this seal campaign … Bob Hunter and Paul Watson end up having a difference of opinion … Hunter wanted to go what he called deep green, less about animal rights and more about the notion of pure ecology, which involves humans" (pers. comm.).

Even as Greenpeace tries to navigate its own identity and how to balance its focus on both green issues and peaceful protests, the organization asserts that "[g]uiding all of our actions, always, is a commitment to nonviolence and personal responsibility" (Greenpeace UK, n.d.). With those words, Greenpeace asserts that it has always been non-violent and it couples non-violence with personal responsibility. The commitment to personal responsibility is further reflected in Greenpeace International's Moral

Code of Conduct (2018) document. It states, among other things, that Greenpeace members: (1) "must act with honesty and integrity and conduct yourself in a professional and courteous manner"; (2) "must strive to maintain the highest ethical standards and conduct yourself in a manner that will be a credit to the vision and values of Greenpeace"; and (3) "must act in the best interests of Greenpeace, separating personal opinions, activities, and affiliations from the performance of professional responsibilities" (Greenpeace International, 2018:3, also see Greenpeace International, 2020).

In my interviews with Greenpeace members, the idea of accountability and acknowledgement of mistakes was discussed. Sune Scheller, for example, acknowledged that "of course there will always be a natural development in how you do things and you'll always have, or you should, some learning from past mistakes" (pers. comm.). John Hocevar of Greenpeace USA noted that: "We've been around a long time, we make mistakes" (pers.comm.). This acknowledgement is poignant in light of how Greenpeace made direct action a popularized tool in environmental- and animal-rights activism, for example, yet while it was protesting against sealing, it "was prepared to apply its direct-action approach to a wide variety of causes without necessarily being fully aware of the potential conflicts and contradictions between them" (Zelko, 2013:236).

When reflecting on activities and attitudes that might warrant an apology, the importance of self-assessment was highlighted. Jessica Wilson (pers. comm.), for example, stated the following:

> I think we often campaign on oil companies or other big polluters and we ask them to be rigorous in their self-assessment and in many cases to make an about-turn on strategies and their business models and I think it's important and courageous for organizations who demand this from the people they are campaigning on to be able to turn that reflection inward and learn from our mistakes as well.

Importantly for the context of this paper, Mads Flarup Christensen of Greenpeace Nordic (Denmark) acknowledged that the circumstances surrounding the seal hunt and protests represent an area where Greenpeace got some things wrong. Notably, he stated: "I think we did not have sufficient knowledge or grounding in those areas and communities to really be able to, as city people and as people from other countries, go into areas and have a massive impact on local life, without being grounded and founded there" (pers. comm.).

Elena Sakirko of Greenpeace Russia, for example, echoes her colleagues in stating that "the position of our office is that we should always be open about that [mistakes]" (pers. comm.). But Greenpeace appears to struggle to acknowledge and make amends for mistakes and the deliberate violence it condoned in its early days during sealing protests, as this paper demonstrates. Owning up to past errors of judgement is an area of challenge for Greenpeace and has been noted by its members as an area for improvement. As John Hocevar commented, when asked how the organization might improve: "Maybe we could get better at acknowledging and learning from our mistakes when we make them." (pers. comm.)

## CONCLUSION

For an organization to claim commitment to principled non-violence, it must illustrate that commitment through its actions and not just words. While this point holds true for pragmatic non-violence as well, proponents of pragmatic non-violence are more oriented toward the usefulness of the strategy and tend to focus on the success and power that such a strategy may gain for them. Greenpeace is an organization that very clearly presents itself as adhering to principled non-violence. However, in the early days of its campaigning against seal hunting the organization made decisions and acted in ways that that violate what principled non-violence stands for. The organization subsequently condoned those early decisions by remaining silent about violent actions it sanctioned and benefited from, even though it recognized their problematic nature internally at that time.

While Greenpeace has to some extent tried to apologize, predominately to Inuit in Canada and Greenland, those efforts have caused some internal disquiet among Greenpeace's members and supporters who are proud of the organization's anti-sealing legacy and do not want any backtracking on it. Therefore, it appears that despite Greenpeace's projected commitment to principled non-violence, the organization has strategically chosen to blur the boundaries of its core principle and present itself as a principled non-violent actor, when in fact it has a history of acting as a pragmatic one instead.

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