

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Re: Stop the Sea Otter Slaughter**

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council in British Columbia wants to kill at least 20 sea otters every year for “ceremonial” purposes. Permitting a sea otter slaughter is not only cruel but opens the door to the killing of other marine mammals such as whales.

In Canada sea otters are listed as of special concern but the exact numbers aren't known. They haven't fully recovered. There are less than 3500 in BC. They have only repopulated 25% to 33% of historic territory over many decades. The impacts of fishing, boat strikes and other causes of death are also undetermined.

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth is targeting a population of approximately 2000 in their territory. This population is at risk of extinction from an oil spill, pollution, disease, fishing, boat strikes and human threats which now includes a potlatch fur trade. Approximately 3000 sea otters alone died during the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill in 1989.

Sea Otters maintain a balance and prevent “sea urchin barrens” - the destruction of kelp forests that provides habitat for a diversity of marine life including threatened fish stocks. So every sea otter matters for their survival and their protection of natural ecosystems.

Shooting otters can be a slow, painful death. It would be a blood bath. Remember the slow, painful death of the gray whale who suffered for hours and repeatedly shot by another Nuu-Chah-Nulth band. In addition, many bodies won't be recovered. The actual deaths would probably be a lot higher than 20 otters.”

Hamilton added, “It's a barbaric past and the blood must not be on the hands of present generations. If “ceremonial” needs call for sea otter furs then get it from other sources. Killing wildlife for potlatch party fashion is cruel and barbaric.”

Instead of killing healthy sea otters there are the following sources:

1. Using drowned sea otters from net entanglement and crab traps.
2. Using dead sea otters from “natural” causes following necropsies.
3. Determining inventories of original potlatch fur garments from museums in BC and worldwide. Many items may not be used and be warehoused in crates. It may be possible to borrow or purchase them. (Note: The originals could be displayed and the faux fur worn during potlatches.)

Note:

US Fish and Wildlife Deanna Lynch stated:

“Sea otter parts (specifically skeleton and pelts) originating from Washington and California are loaned to organizations for education or scientific purposes only, but ownership is retained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.” The hides come from stranded/natural mortality animals.

DFO Linda Nichol stated:

“We do receive a few carcasses of animals that have been found dead and we examine them (including necropsy) to investigate of cause of death, and to develop an understanding of health and disease of sea otters in Canada etc. I expect that if a carcass were relatively fresh, that the skin of a beach-cast sea otter carcass could be used.”

**So instead of killing healthy sea otters there are other sources that could be utilized without any threat to sea otter populations and exposing them to inhumane slaughter. Lifeforce will be urging the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council and DFO to act humanely and responsibly by not supporting a sea otter slaughter.**