

Assembly of First Nations

50 O'Connor Street, Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L2
Telephone: (613) 241-6789 Fax: (613) 241-5808
www.afn.ca



Assemblée des Premières Nations

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SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY December 2-3-4, 2025, Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 71/2025

TITLE: European Union Ban on Seal Products

SUBJECT: Economic Development, Fisheries

MOVED BY: Chief Jenny Brake, Qalipu First Nation, NL

SECONDED BY: Chief Dalton Silver, Sumas First Nation, BC

DECISION: Approved by the AFN Executive Committee by consensus.

WHEREAS:

A. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) states:

- i. Article 20(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.
- ii. Article 26(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
- iii. Article 26(2): Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.
- iv. Article 29(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.
- v. Article 32(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources. If the rationale cannot be explained in five clauses or less due to the complexity of the issue, then background or supporting documentation may be attached.
- vi. Article 32(2): States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to

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Cindy Woodhouse

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the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.

- B. The Senate Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans completed a multi-year parliamentary study on seals and their effect on Canadian fisheries, tabling its final report in May 2024. The report, titled *Sealing the Future: A Call to Action*, made nine recommendations to the Government of Canada, including international market access and development.
- C. The European Commission (EC) implemented a ban on the sale of seal products in the European Union (EU) in 2009, prohibiting most trade in seal products with the exception of those derived from Inuit and other Indigenous communities. This exemption, however, has not allowed for meaningful access to the EU market.
- D. Currently the European Commission is drafting a detailed Fitness Check Report, the EC Working Document and an Executive Summary is expected to be published in 2025. Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1850, [that replaces Commission Regulation (EU) No 737/2010] provides for the recognition of government bodies mandated to certify compliance with the conditions for benefiting from the "Inuit and other indigenous communities" exception and issue the attesting documents that should accompany the seal products. So far Greenland, Nunavut and Northwest Territories of Canada hold these exceptions.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:

1. Call on the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to engage directly with the European Commission to advocate for the full cessation of the ban on seal products from Canada, subject to available funding and resources for that advocacy.
2. Direct the AFN to support the Qalipu First Nation and other coastal First Nations in seeking an exception from the European Union (EU) Implementing Regulation 2015/1850 as an interim measure.
3. Direct the AFN to collaborate directly with organizations already working towards removing these barriers to trade, namely the Fur Institute of Canada/Seals and Sealing Network.
4. Call on Global Affairs Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to implement the Senate report's nine recommendations including calls for better seal population management, increased marine research (including Indigenous knowledge), addressing misinformation about seal populations and harvests, and developing new markets for seal products to help First Nations participate in ocean's economy.

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