

development unless the environmental base is protected. But environmental protection measures will fail unless they take account of the needs of local populations. This is the message of the recent World Commission on Environment and Development (the 'Brundtland Commission'), in which Canada has played a lead role.

The fur trade provides income for people who live on the land without harming nature — while providing a vital check on the impact of other resource development.

Cultures threatened

Recent protests against the seal hunt provide a tragic example of how poorly-informed initiatives, by people far away, can unwittingly upset the close relationship which northern people maintain with their environment.

In the 1950s, Arctic Inuit moved from scattered hunting camps to larger communities where hospitals, schools and other services could be provided. Fortunately, rising prices for seal pelts (thanks largely to improved tanning methods) permitted the Inuit to use newly-developed motorised snowmobiles to travel to their far-flung hunting-grounds.

The Canadian Royal Commission on Sealing established that seal populations were never endangered by hunting. But the collapse of prices following the 1983 EC seal-pelt ban had disastrous social and economic consequences for the Inuit.

Seal meat is a mainstay of the Inuit diet in remote communities where the cost of importing food is astounding. (A cabbage costs \$4 in Pangnirtung, on Baffin Island. A chicken costs \$25.)

But without money from seal pelts, few Inuit can afford to run the snowmobiles and other equipment they need to hunt.

Within two years of the EC ban, Canadian Inuit had lost over three-quarters of their income from sealing and up to one-third of their cash income from all sources (*Report of the Royal Commission on Sealing, 1986*).

In Pangnirtung, for example, income from the sale of seal pelts fell from over \$200 000, in 1981–82, to only \$42 000 two years later. In the small community of Resolute Bay, in the high Arctic, income fell from \$55 000 to \$2400.

Proud, self-sufficient hunters have been reduced to living on government assistance — with all the social and cultural costs this implies.

But the plight of the Inuit also has environmental implications.

The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) has warned that without sealing income, Canadian Inuit could be obliged to accept more rapid industrial development in the north.

This could disrupt the fragile Arctic environment in a land where even increased ship traffic through pack ice has a far more serious effect on seal populations than hunters ever did.

Not least important, the Inuit, like other native (and many non-native) hunters and trappers, carry on traditions which are founded on generations of detailed knowledge about wildlife and their environment.

It would be tragic if these cultures were lost just as ecologists are coming to recognise our need to learn from them.

Like seals for the Inuit, beaver and muskrat provide meat as well as needed income for Indian hunters. It has been estimated that the replacement value of this food often exceeds the price received for the furs. But fur is one of the few resources which can provide the money Indian hunters need to pay for supplies and equipment, while remaining on the land.

Native groups from across Canada, Alaska and Greenland have now formed Indigenous Survival International (ISI) to explain the importance of the fur trade for the survival of their communities — and the role they play in responsible conservation.

Animal welfare

A survey of the fur industry would not be complete without reviewing efforts to ensure the humane treatment of animals.

Canada is the world leader in humane-trap research and development. In response to animal-welfare advocates and concerned trappers, Environment Canada and the International Fur Trade Federation (headquartered in London, England) have jointly contributed over \$5 million to this programme, administered by the Fur Institute of Canada.

Over ninety percent of the wild fur-bearers used in Canada can now be taken with quick-killing systems, the use of which is already promoted by trappers' associations and in many provinces required by new regulations. Rubber-padded holding traps are being recommended for the capture of larger predator species such as red fox and coyote.

Training courses ensure that trappers know how to use the new methods. The courses also teach techniques for preventing the capture of the wrong animals or protected species.

For example, a quick killing set for pine marten can be placed in a specially-constructed box on a tree limb, out of reach of wayward dogs. A sprig of pine protects the opening of the box to prevent birds from springing the trap.

In brief, legitimate animal-welfare concerns are being seriously addressed.

But trapping is used for wildlife management and pest control, even in countries with little or no fur trade. For this reason, Canada has lobbied for the development of *international* trapping standards through the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) in Geneva. Several EC countries have now expressed interest in participating in this process.

Fur farms

About half the value of fur produced in Canada now comes from farms. National standards for raising mink and fox on farms are set out in voluntary Codes of Practice, developed by the breeders' associations and Agriculture Canada, in cooperation with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies.

These codes reflect a strong commitment to