

\$942,000 in furs in first half of 2011

*Average prices for marten down,
lynx and muskrat pelts up this year*

800 trappers in NWT fur trade

by Guy Quenneville
Northern News Services
NWT

Over \$815,000 in genuine Mackenzie Valley furs were sold at the wild fur sale hosted by Fur Harvester's Auction Inc. in Seattle, WA, in March.

The GNWT reported that demand for furs at the auction was especially high from buyers in Russia and China.

Additionally, pelts for mink, marten, fisher, arctic fox and red fox achieved the top auction prices against all other pelts from across Canada and the Northern US.

There were 250 buyers in attendance, and out of those, 55 were competing for wild fur.

The GNWT offered 9,361 marten pelts, with 9,220 – or 98 per cent of pelts offered – selling.

Lynx pelts also sold at an impressive rate, with 385 out of 393 offered pelts finding buyers.

During the same auction one year before, NWT furs netted \$550,000.

The Seattle auction is the second of four such events hosted by Fur Harvester's Auction during the year.

At the first auction of 2011, held in January, \$127,000 in furs was sold.

Combined, the first two auctions of 2011 brought in an estimated \$942,000, compared to \$650,000 during the same point in 2010.

The average prices for marten, wolf and mink pelts were down compared to the average prices reached in 2010.

Whereas marten pelts sold for an average price of \$52 in March, their average for all of 2010 was \$75.

Wolf pelts sold for \$183 in March but \$195 in 2010; similarly, mink sold for \$13 in March but \$20 in 2010.

The average price for wolverine pelts, on the other hand, was \$303 – up by \$53 from the average price attained in 2010.

Two more auctions were scheduled to take place in May and June.

As of early April, the NWT was home to approximately 800 trappers.



photo courtesy of GNWT

NWT furs brought in almost \$1 million in revenue for the GNWT in the first five months of 2011.

NWT Fur Prices

Species	January-March 2011		2010 Sales Summary	
	Average price	Top price	Average price	Top price
Marten	\$52.33	\$60	\$75.39	\$150
Lynx	\$NA	\$NA	\$151.14	\$281.33
Wolverine	\$303.33	\$340	\$250.46	\$397.74
Wolf	\$183.57	\$420	\$195.30	\$509.30
Mink	\$13.47	\$21	\$19.80	\$25.22

Source: GNWT

The average price paid for marten pelts in 2010 was \$75. After two auctions in early 2011, the average price fell to \$52, but at the time there were two auctions scheduled for later in the year.

Average sealskin price creeps up

by Guy Quenneville
Northern News Services
Nunavut

Polar bear prices reach new highs at North bay auction

Arctic fox favoured by world fashion trends

At the January Fur Harvesters Auction in North Bay, Ont., the average price for seal pelts from Nunavut increased to \$23.43 from \$19.64 the previous year, but that was still down from \$38.31 average price in 2009.

Similarly, the top price netted by the pelts increased to \$45 from \$41 – but that was still considerably lower than \$63 in 2009 and \$115 in 2008.

In all, of the 8,254 ringed seal pelts offered at the January auction, 1,431 – or 17 per cent of the total – sold.

By comparison, out of the 12,097 ringed seal pelts offered the previous year's auction, 2,013 sold – the same percentage (17%).

Sealskins netted a total of \$33,524 in North Bay, accounting for nine per cent of all skins, by value, sold at the auction. That's compared to \$39,542 the previous year.

Polar bear, grizzly bear, wolf, wolverine, Arctic fox and red fox skins netted the remaining \$352,846.

As noted by the GN, prices obtained for polar bear and Arctic fox skins were "exceptionally high" compared to the previous year.

The average and top prices for polar bear skins in 2010 were \$2,307 and \$5,355, respectively.

This past January, those prices shot up to \$4,587 and \$8,400.

The total amount sold topped \$311,900 – a 146 per cent increase from \$126,905 the year before.

"...polar bear pelts are limited in supply (Nunavut's quota system allows less than 500 to be harvested per year), so it is a simple case of demand exceeding supply," said the GN. "Polar bears are the iconic Arctic species, so as media coverage has increasingly brought the Arctic into the global spotlight, demand for polar bear rugs and mounts through the taxidermy trade has increased accordingly."

Prices were also high for Arctic fox skins.

At this year's auction, the average and top prices for Arctic fox skins were \$43 and \$58, respectively. By comparison, those prices were \$22 and \$31 in 2010.

The total amount sold reached \$12,687, up from \$1,187 the year before.

According to the GN, "The high arctic fox prices are a result of a larger trend in the fur market (driven by fashion trends) with all the long fur species used in the trim trade (fox, coyote, lynx cat etc) seeing strong price increases over the last year."

In 2010, the GN's Dressed Sealskins for Nunavummiut Program – which provides

dressed and dyed ringed sealskins to Nunavut seamstresses and craftspeople at cost and offers free shipping – sold approximately 2,500 sealskins back to Nunavummiut.

In 2010-2011, 709 individuals sold sealskins through the GN fur program.

However, as the GN noted, "this is an underestimate of the number of seal hunters in Nunavut, as often the individuals cleaning and selling the skins are supplied by several hunters in their family. Also, many hunters choose to use their sealskins domestically rather than sell them."

For cleaned and dried

ringed sealskins, hunters are paid a minimum of \$25 and a maximum of \$60, depending on size and quality. Average payment is approximately \$50.

The GN is doing much to promote its sealskins at a time when the European Union has a ban on imports of the product.

The government's department of environment has a pilot project underway whereby dressed sealskins from the Fur Harvesters Auction are sold on consignment in Iqaluit. The goal of the project is to make dressed sealskins

more readily available to Nunavummiut.

In addition to the harvesters auction, Nunavut sealskins and furs were marketed at the Beijing Fur and Leather Fair in January and were scheduled to be marketed at the North American Fur and Fashion Exposition (NAFFEM) in Montreal this past spring.

Fur handling workshops were held in Rankin Inlet, Baker Lake, Arviat, Kugluktuk, Kugaaruk and Gjoa Haven earlier this year to teach proper handling techniques for furs entering the taxidermy market (wolf, wolverine, polar bear, grizzly bear). The goal of the workshops was to enable hunters to earn more money for their skins, as taxidermy represents the top end of the market for Nunavut furs.

GN skins offered at Fur Harvesters Auction – North Bay, Ont., January 2010					
Species	Offered	Sold	High (\$)	Average (\$)	Total (\$)
Ringed Seal	8,254	1,431	45.00	23	33,524.00
Polar Bear	71	68	8,400.00	4,587.00	311,900.00
Grizzly Bear	6	6	4,300.00	3,050.00	18,300.00
Wolf	49	30	410.00	202.00	6,055.00
Wolverine	19	12	470.00	288.00	3,460.00
Arctic Fox	319	295	58.00	43.00	12,687.00
Red Fox	26	22	45.00	20.00	444.00

Source: Government of Nunavut

At the Fur Harvesters Auction in January, the average price for seal pelts increased to \$23.43 from \$19.64 the year before.

Nunavut sealskin statistics by harvest year: Fur Harvesters Auction Inc.'s sale

Year	Pelts sold	Average price	Top price
2011	1,431	\$23.43	\$45
2010	2,013	\$19.64	\$41.00
2009	4,059	\$38.31	\$63.25
2008	1,101	\$55.90	\$115.00
2007*	500	\$55.00	\$100.00
2006	5,975	\$69.33	\$121.29

Source: Fur Harvesters Auction Inc.

*2007 harvest was primarily sold at auction in 2008. Likewise 2008 harvest was put up for sale at 2009 auction.

Polar bear skin sales accounted for 81 per cent of overall sales of Nunavut skins at the Fur Harvesters Auction in North Bay, Ont. in January.