







## **NOTICE TO READER**

**This document was submitted 20 October 2010 at the Annual General Meeting of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association**

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the Commission in each community.

Our team of professional Inuit translators and interpreters from the QIA office as well as the freelance community showed to us the respect for language and its nuances and the amazing mental dexterity that interpreters and translators possess. We personally thank Jay Arnakak, Julia Demcheson, Mali Curley, Leetia Janes, Suzie Napayok, and Elisapee Ikkidulak for their invaluable service.

We decided, quite correctly, that we needed a clear, professional voice to gather the diverse perspectives of the Commission's testimonies and historical reports in the Final Report. Brian Cameron was brought on board to help me take on this monumental and important task, and we have not been disappointed. His empathetic manner, depth of experience and quick mind, and the quality of the final product, have proven the wisdom of adding him to the Commission team.

We would also like to thank Maureen van Dreumel, Exchange Communications. Her ability to translate our extensive work on this pivotal time of transition into plain language helped us clearly communicate the Commission's work, findings and recommendations to our stakeholders and the public.

We employed SHOK media to produce high-quality Public Service Announcements for our return into the communities for our consultations and our Video Report. The videographers, technical wizards and travelling companions—Mark Poirier, David Poisey, Joeline Sanguya, and others—were an unobtrusive, yet professional presence at our hearings that allowed the true words and emotions of witnesses to be preserved for all time. Their work was ably complemented by the skills of script writer Stewart Dudley, Stiff Sentences.

Staff at numerous archives and libraries provided our research team with expert guidance, research support and copyright permissions. In particular, the diligent efforts of the staff at Library and Archives Canada, NWT Archives, RCMP Archives Management Section, Anglican Archives and Archives Deschâtelets were indispensable to the Commission's research.

We very much appreciated the support provided by the RCMP and Commissioner William J.S. Elliott. This included granting the Commission access to the RCMP archives and the right to publish documents and images. The RCMP has expressed its desire for a better, cooperative and mutually supportive relationship with Inuit, and I look forward to its future efforts towards achieving *saimaqatigiingniq*.

All research materials, as well as community testimony files, were compiled in a research database. This collection, which will provide future access and use of the materials by all Inuit and other Canadians, would not have been possible without the work of Tim Wayne, Xist Inc. who acted as its architect and provided ongoing technical support.

During the course of the interviews and throughout the research conducted in support of the Commission, many individuals have generously contributed their time and knowledge. These individuals have provided the QTC with a special insight into government, academic and HBC involvement in the Qikiqtani region's past. The QTC would like to thank all of those individual contributors. [removed list of names] A list of these individuals is included in the appendix.

The Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation provided the Commission with a substantial grant over a two-year period. This funding enabled the Commission to film the public hearings and



private interviews, and to conduct archival research for the production of the final report.

The Inuit business community assisted the work of the Commission through generous discounts for all our travel from First Air, Air Inuit, and Unaalik Aviation/Kenn Borek Aviation. The support and professionalism of their staff made our work all the more enjoyable.



private.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to learning about events and impacts through Inuit testimonies, we also completed an extensive archival research program and interviewed Qallunaat<sup>6</sup> who worked in the region during this period. Among the people interviewed were several retired RCMP officers, government officials and academic researchers.

The testimonies and historical investigations have been used to write histories of each of the 13 Qikiqtani communities (most have not previously been the subject of such detailed histories), and histories of 12 topics of importance to the QIA and the Commission, including relocations, alcohol, development, education, housing, the RCMP, and qimmiit. A complete list of these histories is included as Appendix 1.

The Commission has also developed a database to catalogue all the archival and oral history information collected. Information to be made available in the database includes transcripts and translations, as well as audio and video materials. Once completed, the database will be accessible through the QIA until a final repository and format are determined.

This report is divided into two parts. The first summarizes what I and my QTC colleagues learned from listening to Inuit testimonies, and from the Commission's archival research. It also presents an overview of my main recommendations. The second part is a detailed discussion of opportunities for change that will help heal the wounds that remain from this period of cultural, social and economic transformation, promote recognition of the worth of Inuit culture and reconciliation with Qallunaat institutions, and contribute to numerous efforts being made by Inuit to take control of their futures from now on.

<sup>5</sup> All of these testimonies had to do with sexual abuse, often during childhood, at residential schools, sanatoria or in the individual's community. Whenever possible these testimonies are included in the database, but the identities of the individuals have been protected by the use of pseudonyms.

<sup>6</sup> Qallunaat is an Inuktitut term that describes anyone who is not of Inuit ancestry.



## What We Learned

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### Introduction

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For many years now, Inuit elders in the Qikiqtani region have been haunted by a deep sense of loss, shame and puzzlement as they remember how their lives changed in the decades after 1950, when Qallunaat began arriving in large numbers. Before then, most Inuit families lived on the land in dynamic and tightly knit kinship groups ranging from five to thirty people. They moved between ilagiit nunagivaktangit by dog team or boat, depending on the season, in pursuit of wildlife that supplied them with most of their needs—food, clothing and shelter. From the time of their first contacts with explorers and whalers, and increasingly after the establishment of the Hudson Bay Company, Inuit hunted animals—primarily fox and seal—to trade for rifles, ammunition and other southern goods. They came into the year-round settlements established by traders, the RCMP or the churches one or two times each year to trade, socialize and participate in religious services and holiday festivities.

By 1975, all but a few Inuit families lived in government-created permanent settlements, and many of them felt that their lives had become worse, not better. The decision to give up the traditional way of life was almost never an easy one, and once made, it proved to be irreversible. Inuit made enormous sacrifices by moving into settlements, living in permanent housing, giving up their qimmiit, sending their children to school or accepting wage employment. Once they had made their decision, they discovered that government assurances of a sufficient number of jobs and better living conditions were illusory in many cases. Looking around, Inuit often felt and saw despair as they, their family members and neighbours struggled to adjust to circumstances beyond their control, even though some received benefits from living in settlements, such as less risk in daily life, better health care and options to work for wages rather than hunt. Settlement life often imposed a new form of poverty,<sup>7</sup> and hindered access to the land and the country food<sup>8</sup> that nourished them.

As I visited their communities over the last two years, Qikiqtani Inuit spoke to me in honest and straightforward terms about the day-to-day challenges and satisfactions of living as hunters and gatherers. Their deep connections to each other and the land sustained a rich culture and language. Extensive and specialized Inuit knowledge and skills passed down from generation to generation ensured their survival in the Arctic environment. While life on the land was never easy, they remembered the autonomy and self-sufficiency that were lost when families moved into settlements. They also spoke passionately and eloquently about the ties of kinship that united members of each ilagiit nunagivaktangat. Each person within a kinship group was valued for his or her contribution to the group's well-being and success. Excellence was highly respected, whether it was in hunting, problem-solving, leadership or sewing. At the same time, a

<sup>7</sup> The term “poverty” should be considered in the context of the period. It was possible for Inuit families in ilagiit nunagivaktangat to feel they were living comfortably, even though they had very little income and would be considered extremely “poor” by western standards. Inuit in settlements, however, needed cash income from wage employment or social benefits to meet daily needs.

<sup>8</sup> Country food is locally available and produced food by Inuit, e.g. seal, caribou, berries, polar bear, fish, etc.

tradition of humility dictated that gifted individuals should not boast or otherwise demonstrate pride. While conflicts were inevitable, they were minimized or resolved as quickly as possible, since they had the potential to put the group at risk.

In times of real hardship, knowledge that the hard times would pass and that the game would return gave people the will to continue, and find comfort and familiarity in the changing seasons. As Pauloosie Veevee of Pangnirtung explained:

At times during winter months we would occasionally go hungry but not starve...It seemed like a happy life as long as we had food in our mouths and warm clothing to wear, we were content with it. Our standards today are much bigger now compared to what we had then. Today we have excessive possessions and we are not happy with our lives and we struggle with life when we have all the conveniences now.<sup>9</sup>

The Inuit who spoke to us wanted to tell us and all Canadians how their lives had changed dramatically, but they also wanted explanations for the changes that continue to affect them and their families today. How can a hunter who witnesses his qimmiit destroyed by government authorities cope with a loss of his self-worth? How can his wife and children cope with his loss? How do you deal with the interpersonal animosities that arise when you live in a settlement with ten or twenty times the number of people who lived in your ilagiit nunagivaktangat, and with many of whom you have no ties of kinship? Does the removal without a decent leave-taking of a loved one from your family outweigh the cure of a deadly disease? Was this the only choice Inuit had? Is it possible that one official could have exerted such awe and fear that people followed life-altering orders?

These are just some of the profound questions and observations presented to the QTC by Qikiqtani Inuit. Some were moved to tears by the memories of this traumatic period in their lives—tears that sprang from re-living grief and loss, or from a sense of relief at finally telling their history or giving a voice to the experiences of their parents and grandparents.

The depth of emotion also came from feelings of failure and guilt for mistakes that they believed that they had made as parents, husbands and wives. Time and again, we were told the value in having accounts of events shared for the first time to an official Inuit-led body, which greatly aided in unburdening a heavy heart. There was also visible evidence that many of the speakers were at peace after testifying, or on their way towards healing.

In the words of Jaykolasie Killiktee of Pond Inlet:

[We] were forced to undergo a forceful and traumatic period in our lives. I am grateful that the Commission was able to come to Pond Inlet and that this process has been well thought out. This very painful experience that we've held close to our bosom for many years is very difficult to speak of but I am so happy for the opportunity to talk about it. Thank you for giving Inuit that opportunity, and especially thank you for giving me the opportunity.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Pauloosie Veevee. Interview with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. (1 July 2006) Pangnirtung. [QIPA14].

<sup>10</sup> Jaykolasie Killiktee. Testimony before the Qikiqtani Truth Commission. (10 December 2008) Pond Inlet. [QTPI10].







would visit settlements for short periods to trade, to receive services, or to drop off their children at school hostels, before returning to the land. By the early 1960s, however, more Inuit were effectively living in settlements, even if they arrived with the intention to remain only as long as necessary for a child to complete schooling or for a relative to return from health treatment in the South.

Every Inuk remembers when he or she moved to a settlement; those born in settlements know the stories of their parents. These moves and the consequences were a central theme in Inuit testimonies to this Commission.

Some Inuit families moved voluntarily to the settlements, often for employment or access to health care, or because the government was offering housing at very low rents. As Moses Kasarnak of Pond Inlet explained:

We were directly told that if we moved we would get a house and that it would have a table and dishes. It was like Christmas that we were going to get all these.<sup>12</sup>

Many other Inuit moved to avoid being separated from children attending school, or to be with other family members who had moved for any of the above reasons.

However, other families moved because they felt coerced by government authorities. Thomas Kublu of Igloodik was one of many witnesses who remembered moving because he was ordered to do so:

In the winter of 1962, the police travelling by dog team coming from Arctic Bay passed by our camp and told us that we have to move to Pond Inlet to enable the children to attend school. I believe the school in Pond Inlet had been operating since 1958. When the authorities like the police and Social and Family Services officials ordered us to move to Pond Inlet, we had no say and we had to comply with the orders from the authorities. We feared going against their orders and were scared of the authorities. This was the case with all Qallunaat who held the power and positions in the new settlement life. So we moved to Pond Inlet in April 1962.<sup>13</sup>

Many witnesses also told me that they were evacuated or relocated with little or no notice, and as result, they did not have the chance to pack and bring their belongings into the settlements. While Inuit had few possessions, those they did have were extremely important to them, and took a long time to procure or make. Without these items, it was difficult to resume hunting from settlements. Angawasha Poisey, who lived at Kivitoo, recalled the anguish caused by the government when her entire community<sup>14</sup> of about 30 people was evacuated with no warning to Qikiqtarjuaq. Government officials had previously argued that the community was no longer sustainable, but Inuit leaders would not give in to repeated pressures to move to Qikiqtarjuaq. Shortly after the tragic deaths of three prominent hunters, however, the government forcibly relocated remaining individuals, even while the families were still in mourning.

<sup>12</sup> Moses Kasarnak. Interview with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. (17 February 2005) Pond Inlet [QIPI21].

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Kublu . Testimony read before the Qikiqtani Truth Commission. (26 January 2009) Igloodik [QTIG19].

<sup>14</sup> Kivitoo was a community, not an ilagiit nunagivaktangat.

Three days after my in-law, my uncle, died of hypothermia by accident on the sea ice, a plane came in. They didn't even warn us. [...] They told us that we would have something to eat and a place to stay. They asked us to bring our cups and bedding. They did not even tell us to bring food because there would be enough to feed us. My in-law hid some tea and some food in the bedding. I was pregnant. They told us that there would be plenty of food and a place to stay. [...] [P]erhaps they should have given us some time to grieve and to accept the fact that we were moving. They should have told us in advance and let us prepare what to bring.<sup>15</sup>

Angawasha and others believed they would be returning home, so they stored all their belongings in their qarmaqs. When they came back to collect them, the qarmaqs had been bulldozed and/or burned with all their contents, including their personal items and essential hunting gear.

A few years after the closing of Kivitoo, the nearby community of Padloping was also closed and the 34 Inuit living there moved to Qikiqtarjuaq. A school teacher at Padloping at the time has written that the government was determined to close the community in the interests of administrative efficiency, and that the residents were coerced into the move. People who spoke to the QTC agree. Jacopie Nuqingaq told me:

They came in to ask us and pressure us to move. ...We were scared of Qallunaat so we did whatever they said. [...] When we got here, our dogs were slaughtered and we had no choice.<sup>16</sup>

Another witness, Joshua Alookie, said his parents were promised running water, good housing, good schooling and employment opportunities in Qikiqtarjuaq. Mr. Alookie's parents had to wait almost 20 years after relocating before they had indoor plumbing.

According to archival records, administrative efficiency was also the reason for the closing of a third community, South Camp on Belcher Island, and the relocation of its inhabitants to North Camp (Sanikiluaq) in 1969-70. Witnesses who testified to the QTC told me they felt enormous pressure to move quickly to Sanikiluaq. No assistance was offered by the government. People remember that some groups became separated, while others became stuck in the ice or had to carry a boat over land. With no radios, limited food rations and boats laden with relocatees (including elders and young children), the move was dangerous. Upon arrival in Sanikiluaq, the promised housing was not available. Many of the relocatees had left what little possessions they had behind, expecting the necessities of life to be provided for them in Sanikiluaq. Many also believed that the move would be temporary. All relocatees felt that they had not been properly informed or prepared for a permanent move.

Lottie Arratutainaq told me:

We moved here with our clothes and left everything behind [...] as if we were coming back. When we moved here there was no assistance of any kind [...]. So

<sup>15</sup> Angawasha Poisey. Testimony before the Qikiqtani Truth Commission. (8 September 2008) Clyde River [QTCR02].

<sup>16</sup> Jacopie Nuqingaq. Testimony before the Qikiqtani Truth Commission () [QTQK02].



it was a very sad event for me.<sup>17</sup>

The circumstances of relocations varied, but sadness and regret were expressed by virtually all Inuit who testified about their experiences of moving during this period.

## Housing in the Settlements

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Whether or not they moved voluntarily, many Inuit told me that the promises about a “better life” that had been made to them were not kept. Some Inuit who moved into settlements, gave up their life on the land on the basis of those promises and assurances, especially for “free” or low-cost housing. Housing was a frequent source of disappointment: an insufficient number of houses were built, and these were often of poor quality and unsuitable for the Arctic environment. Beginning in the 1950s, government officials had identified poor housing as a leading cause of the extraordinary rates of illness and poor chances of recovery. Reports of “slum conditions” by visitors to the Arctic were an embarrassment to the government, and helped to spur efforts to develop well-built and affordable houses. However, while housing was the target of the largest government investment directed at Inuit from 1959 to 1975, the resulting programs were poorly planned and implemented, with little consultation with Inuit.

Some Inuit who spoke to us said that they appreciated the chance to live in permanent frame houses. Many others said that when they moved to a settlement, no housing was available, and they had to board with friends or family in already crowded houses, live in tents or hastily build shacks from scraps leftover from the building of government buildings. Apphia Kiliqtee of Pond Inlet told me about one such experience of living in a dwelling that was not appropriate for life in the Arctic and feeling poor:

I don't know exactly what the year was but I was about 6-7 years old. We had to move to Pond Inlet from Mount Herodier. A teacher came down to our camp and told us that we had to go to school. ... Knowing there was no housing in Pond Inlet, we ended up in a tent near the river. The whole winter we stayed in the tent. It was so difficult for us. We didn't have any food to eat. Every morning we woke up to everything frozen. ... We left everything at our camp. We didn't have anything in the tent except for sleeping bags, pot, cups. All I remember is my grandmother trying to use a tea pot to cook with. And that was for the whole winter. Our grandpa in the winter would try to pick up some cardboard boxes and put them in around and inside the tent, and when we had enough snow, he would build an igloo around the tent to keep us warm. It was difficult for us, not knowing, coming to the community like that and not having housing.<sup>18</sup>

Apphia and her family finally got what was known as a “matchbox” house, after about two years in the tent. Twenty family members lived in that one-room, 12x24-foot house, sleeping on the floor.

In most of the Qikiqtani communities I visited, Inuit testified that they were promised housing free or at very low rents, and that these promises were not kept. In many cases, witnesses told me they had been promised they would pay only between \$2 and \$6 a month in rent, but that the rent

<sup>17</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>18</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

was subsequently increased. Rental contracts, legal terminology and financial concepts such as mortgages and cost-of-living increases were unfamiliar to Inuit. Various attempts were made to explain aspects of the housing program, such as the benefits, responsibilities and true costs of occupying housing. However, nobody in the federal or territorial bureaucracies appears to have been given responsibility for explaining the entire program directly to Inuit in Inuktitut, from the delivery and construction of housing to payments, rents, maintenance and ownership options.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Explanations about the rules concerning the terms and cost of housing were confusing to everyone—bureaucrats and Inuit. Until the 1970s, most Inuit had little if any disposable income. Those on social welfare were effectively given “free” or fixed low-rent housing, since government provided sufficient income to cover the monthly housing cost. Inuit also saw discrepancies between their housing and those of government workers, especially in Iqaluit. Officials acknowledged that concepts about ownership, renting, subsidies and costs were inadequately conveyed during training sessions with Inuit in the 1960s. (See: Eskimo Housing Education, Frobisher and Keewatin region, Arctic District, N.W.T. Unpublished paper, second interim report. [S.I.: s.n.],1967.) Compounding normal linguistic challenges was the reality that many terms, such as “regular employment” and “market value”, were almost irrelevant in the Qikiqtani region. Similarly, the distinction between cost of living increases and rent increases, the effect of changes in employment status in determining rents, and obligations concerning maintenance and repair, were not fully appreciated by lease-holders.



displacement contributed to the number of incidents of excessive drinking. As examples, there were few places where Inuit could drink safely and comfortably in groups. Houses were small and military bars were restricted to base personnel. Inuit generally saw Qallunaat drinking heavily to get drunk, not as part of relaxed social situations. Drunkenness was often a legitimate defence for bad behaviour. In addition, the social controls that existed in tightly knit *ilagiiit nunagivaktangit* were weakened and difficult to apply in the settlement context. For all these reasons, and more, some Inuit began drinking too much and too often, endangering their own health and compromising the health and happiness of their families. The response from officials was often moralistic and racist. In 1962, for instance, an official suggested that drunkenness among Inuit was the result of flaws in personality, rather than a symptom of changing social conditions or cultural experience. He asserted that the “trouble is not with recognizing or even acknowledging drinking as a problem but rather with finding within themselves the power to control their drinking.”<sup>21</sup> Many officials ignored the equally devastating consequences of Qallunaat drunkenness on Inuit and did little to control the importation of alcohol (and later, drugs) into the settlements.

No matter what the cause of drinking, however, by the 1970s, when almost all Inuit were living in settlements and most had access to liquor and even drugs, many families were experiencing first-hand the devastating consequences of substance abuse, including alcoholism, addiction, physical and sexual abuse, neglect of children, poverty and death. In Iqaluit, Cape Dorset and Resolute, in particular, drunkenness brought Inuit into increasing conflict with Qallunaat authorities, including Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and welfare officials.

Martha Idlout of Resolute told us how her parents drank to dull the pain of their lives, and how their children suffered in turn:

Everyone was hurting inside, not living as they should. People growing up with a lot of pain. I don't want my grandchildren to grow up with that kind of pain and end up like us. We know that we took all the substances, alcohol and drugs. [...] There was a bar here too, and the military as well. The whole time they would get drunk and us children would have to find a place to stay. [...] When men got drunk [...] we would hide under houses. [...] Back then, the whole town would be drunk for a whole week or three days.<sup>22</sup>

From the beginning of the settlements, Inuit were aware of these problems. Some people attempted to control access to alcohol in their communities. Their success was limited, however, because they were only allowed to speak about rules around the product, not the programs needed to understand and address the full range of options concerning individuals, social conditions and economic realities. Inuit laws, *piqujait* (rules of acceptable behaviour), and customs, *pittailiniq* (refraining from doing what is not allowed), were challenged and mainly ignored in the settlement context. Inuit were expected to exercise self-control and to respect individual limits and rules consistent with Qallunaat social norms, even though they were given very little support to deal with the negative effects of alcohol use and they were living in a

<sup>21</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG 85, Northern Affairs Program, Series 1884-85, Vol. 1951, Files A-1000/169, pt. 1, item: F.H. Compton, Report on Trip to Frobisher, 31 January 1962, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.



condition of dependency, subject to the paternalistic attitudes and policies of Qallunaat, which made them particularly prone to alcohol abuse.

## Schooling and its Effects on Inuit Culture

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In the 1950s, the Canadian government decided that all Inuit children needed to be given a formal education so that they could be brought into mainstream Canadian society and into the new jobs that an expanding northern economy was expected to provide. This decision, and the methods that were used, had profound consequences for the children, their families and communities, and Inuit culture. Some of these consequences were intentional, and some were not.

Before formal schooling was introduced, Inuit children learned the skills they needed to carry out their traditional roles by observation and practice. Inuit boys learned how to hunt, and thus feed and take care of a family, by accompanying their fathers on hunting trips; the knowledge and skills they acquired included understanding weather, navigation, and animal behaviour. Girls generally learned important skills, such as food preparation, preparing skins, sewing clothing, making kamiks (skin boots), child rearing and home care by watching and helping their mothers. As July Papatsie, an Inuit artist, told me:

We are very good with our hands because we had to be. That's why a man who did not know how to make an iglu could not marry a wife and a woman who could not sew could not marry a man.<sup>23</sup>

In the first 60 years of the twentieth century, attempts by outsiders to teach children reading, writing and arithmetic were scattered and inconsistent. Following the Second World War this began to change as informal networks of education were replaced by a new government program that aimed to make Inuit into full Canadian “citizens.”

Government officials initially expected that Inuit could be convinced to place their children in school hostels for all or a portion of the school year while parents and non-school-age siblings returned to their ilagiit nunagivaktangat. Officials were surprised to find that Inuit parents who agreed to schooling were not prepared to leave their children in the care of others. Families came to the settlement with their children, living in tents until housing was available. Gamailie Kilukishak of Pond Inlet was one of many parents who recalled: “I didn’t really want to move but ... I didn’t want to be separated from my child.”<sup>24</sup> Both the written record and Inuit testimony show that most Inuit had reason to believe that they would lose family allowances if they did not send their children to school. This was a very serious threat indeed, since family allowances had become essential to the survival of many families.

Some children were sent much farther away, to residential schools in Churchill (Manitoba), Chesterfield Inlet, Yellowknife, Inuvik and Iqaluit. Others were sent to live with Qallunaat families in southern cities, such as Ottawa, Edmonton and Halifax. This caused great anguish for both the parents and the children. Jacobie Panipak of Clyde River described watching children being taken away to Churchill:

<sup>23</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>24</sup> Interview in Inuktitut.

They had absolutely nothing, no suitcase... They had a small, very small bag of belongings with them. I felt so much empathy for them when they left like that. I had so much love for them. I felt for them. They had hardly anything, maybe a few toys and a few belongings when they left.<sup>25</sup>

In the classrooms, children were taught a curriculum that often had no relevance to life in the North. Materials such as the “Dick and Jane” reading series, for example, described a world that was utterly strange to Inuit children, and one that they would likely never experience. Many who went through the educational system remembered being made to forget their Inuit roots. Kaujak Kanajuk of Pond Inlet remembers:

We weren’t allowed to draw dogs or tell stories about them, anything that had something to do with being Inuk, about igloo or anything, as soon as we came here [to Pond Inlet].<sup>26</sup>

As I mentioned, one of the goals of the education system was to allow Inuit to take their place in a new northern economy based on southern norms. Some Inuit parents agreed to have their children educated in the “Canadian” school system believing that this would provide them with greater opportunities and prepare them for the new jobs they had been promised. This decision was not made lightly, especially since a child going to school would not have the time to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to live on the land. In practice, however, schools did not maintain the standards of southern institutions, and learning was often directed toward the limited opportunities in manual labour for men, or secretarial and institutional work for women. Even these initiatives often failed because the jobs were too few, and the education prepared Inuit for little else within the broader world. There was no attempt to prepare Inuit for management roles, so that they could participate as equals in northern development, and take control of their own lives.

Another harmful element of the educational system concerned language. Children were taught exclusively in English. Many teachers saw it as an essential part of their job to forbid the use of Inuktitut both in and out of the classroom. I heard many sad and disturbing descriptions of physical and mental abuse in cases where a child was unable to learn English quickly enough, or when a child used Inuktitut among his or her peers. Geela Akulukjak of Pangnirtung wept as she related the account of her abuse:

I was told to go to school here and I did my best to go to school. Ever since then I was scared of Qallunaat because a teacher I had would slap me, would slap the children who could not speak English, with a yard-stick; she was a woman. That always hurts me, because I couldn’t speak English, she forced us to try.<sup>27</sup>

July Papatsie also told me of the abuse that was handed out in the school he attended:

Children who spoke Inuktitut were punished. I remember their first punishment: they had to put their hands on the desk and got twenty slaps on the back of their hand. The second time they got thirty slaps on their bare bum in front of all the

<sup>25</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>26</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>27</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.



class. They were forced to eat a bar of soap. They would throw up for 2-3 days. They were told that it was because they spoke an evil language.<sup>28</sup>

The consequence of the school system was a deep cultural and generational divide between children and their parents. Children who had lost the ability to speak in Inuktitut could no longer communicate with parents and grandparents who knew little to no English. Equally serious was the loss of cultural teachings, beliefs, values and skills, especially those needed for activities on the land. Children raised in schools with southern foods and values went home and viewed their parent's traditional values and habits with disdain, not understanding how difficult and challenging it was to make the transition from living on the land to settlement life, with all its disempowering influences. This was a cultural divide that often proved hard to repair. In the words of former residential school student Paul Quassa, "We lost that knowledge that we would have had if we had grown up with our parents." Many parents felt guilty that they had made the wrong decision by sending their children to school, since the education they received left them ill-prepared for a life of self-reliance and self-determination in either the modern wage economy or the traditional economy.

### Importance of Hunting

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Hunting has always been a defining element of Inuit culture. Over countless generations, Inuit have developed a deep understanding of their environment, and applied this understanding in laws, customs and practices that would ensure the wise use of game resources, on which their survival depended. As one Inuit elder, Juda Taqtu, told me:

We used to have a system or rules that we had to follow within our own camp—we were told what to do, not to waste and how many to get, not to overdo it.<sup>29</sup>

However, these traditions were called into question as the Canadian government increased its presence in the North, and as Inuit were drawn into the settlements.

In the 1950s, the government stepped up its enforcement of game laws in the Qikiqtani region. These laws addressed southern concerns about preserving and conserving species, rather than northern realities, and Inuit were not asked to contribute their extensive knowledge of Arctic game populations. The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) was very concerned that Inuit would over-harvest animals in switching from traditional to modern technologies, including motor boats and rifles. Even though CWS officials did not have sufficient or reliable information about game populations, they developed laws with strict limits or prohibitions on the types and number of animals that could be taken, and restrictions on the dates when they could be hunted. Simeonie Kaernerker told me:

We went through harder times when the government started controlling the wildlife we used as food and clothing. The Inuit people were told to start working. But the Inuit who went out hunting were able to go out hunting whenever they wanted. They caught whatever they saw. [Then] they were told not to do that

<sup>28</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>29</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

anymore.<sup>30</sup>

As a result, Inuit often had to starve or hunt illegally, and hide their catches from the authorities, because otherwise they could face significant fines or threats of incarceration.

While game laws could sometimes be disregarded when required, the transition to settlement life threatened the Inuit hunting culture more profoundly. Many Inuit who came to the settlements wished to alternate wage work with periods of hunting, which would allow them to continue eating country foods and maintain their connections to the land. This meant keeping their qimmiit.

### Killings of Qimmiit

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Qimmiit were essential for Inuit life on the land. The care and management of a dog team was an integral part of Inuit culture, daily life, maturity and survival. The closeness of this relationship is captured by the Inuktitut term for dog team, *qimutsiit*, which includes both the qimmiit and the hunter. Qimmiit allowed families to travel long distances as they moved between ilagiit nunagivaktangat. In winter, for example, they pulled hunters and their equipment for hunting and trap lines; brought the game back to ilagiit nunagivaktangat or the trading post; helped locate game by scent; protected against predators; assisted in polar bear hunts; and warned about sea cracks while traveling. In spring and summer they carried packs. In all conditions, they could find their way home in perilous weather and ice conditions.

Pauloosie Veevee of Pangnirtung was one of many witnesses who spoke eloquently about the importance of qimmiit:

Not all Inuit men living in traditional camps had dog teams. If an Inuk man didn't have a team of his own, it was interpreted that he was yet not quite a man. ... An Inuk was judged in accordance with the dogs' performance, appearance, health and endurance. If the dogs looked well-fed and well-mannered the owner was seen as a great hunter and admired by others. If an Inuk man's dog team was notably happy and well-fed, they would be able to take him long distances [and were] aids to his independence and masculinity. That is how significantly important dogs were to Inuit.<sup>31</sup>

Between 1957 and 1975, there was a dramatic decline in the number of qimmiit in the Qikiqtani region. Many qimmiit died as a result of disease outbreaks, in spite of a major effort made by the RCMP to inoculate and replace animals. Inuit knew, however, that disease could be expected and that teams could be reconstituted quickly with the remaining dogs after epidemics. Some hunters shot their qimmiit before moving into settlements, because they knew qimmiit were not allowed, or realized they would no longer have a use for them. Others abandoned their teams after they took work in the settlements, because they no longer had enough time to hunt or care for the dogs. In other cases, dog teams were left alone when their owners were suddenly sent south for medical treatment. Some qimmiit were taken over by other hunters who needed to replace their teams. The decline in the numbers of qimmiit was also due to increasing use of snowmobiles in

<sup>30</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>31</sup> Interview in Inuktitut.



the late 1960s, which allowed settlement-based hunters to travel greater distances in shorter times. It is also an undisputed fact that hundreds—perhaps thousands—of qimmiit were shot by the RCMP and other authorities in settlements from the mid-1950s onwards because Qallunaat considered the dogs to be a danger to inhabitants or feared they could spread dog diseases.

Although qimmiit are large and potentially dangerous animals, Inuit have successfully managed them for countless generations. In ilagiit nunagivaktangat, qimmiit were highly socialized with other qimmiit and with people. Inuit integrated qimmiit into the practices of everyday life, spirituality and storytelling. Loose qimmiit knew their places among other dogs and within the ilagiit nunagivaktangat. They could protect themselves and others. Once they came into the settlements, however, qimmiit posed many problems. With so many families moving into the settlements with their teams, the sheer number of qimmiit was in itself challenging and problematic. Owners found it difficult to find time to hunt enough to feed the qimmiit, so the dogs often had to forage for themselves, well beyond the limits of their owner's house, either by scrounging for food at the dump or by stealing food. As anthropologist Toshio Yatsushiro noted in 1959, the decision of Inuit to let their qimmiit forage was “perfectly reasonable.” Even though there was a high risk of the dogs being shot for being loose, if qimmiit could not forage for food, they would die anyway.<sup>32</sup>

Qallunaat had very little or no experience with working dogs, and were either fearful of or careless around loose qimmiit.<sup>33</sup> Qimmiit in turn did not adapt well to being around strangers or new qimmiit; they were more wary, and their behaviour became less predictable and potentially more dangerous. In addition, people living in the settlement were likely to be walking outside in store-bought clothes that offered no protection from dog bites.<sup>34</sup> Authorities—primarily RCMP members—responded to the perceived danger by shooting loose qimmiit, often without explanation or warning.

The killings took place under the authority of the *Ordinance Respecting Dogs*. This ordinance stated that dogs were not permitted to run at large in designated settlements, and that dogs in harness were permitted within a settlement only if they were muzzled or under the control of a person over 16 years of age who was “capable of ensuring that the dog will not harm the public or create a nuisance.” The owner had up to five days to claim the dog(s) and pay a fine. However, the ordinance also provided that if a dog officer was unable to seize a dog that was running at large, or was otherwise in violation of the ordinance, he could destroy it, and no compensation would be provided.

These provisions were inappropriate, to say the least. Chains to secure the dogs were either not available or prohibitively expensive, and ropes were not a long-term solution, since qimmiit could easily chew through them. Muzzles would have prevented dogs from eating snow, which they need for hydration, and would not have allowed them to protect themselves from predators, such as bears, wolves or even other loose dogs; nobody had time to supervise qimmiit all day,

<sup>32</sup> Autry National Center, Institute for the Study of the American West, Braun Research Library, Collection MS 212 (Toshio Yatsushiro), Box 2, File 44, transcript of interview with Joomii, E-7-444, 26 July 1959.

<sup>33</sup> Both Inuit and Qallunaat believed that qimmiit sometimes interbred with wolves, contributing to Qallunaat fear of this breed of dog. In addition, the RCMP warned that qimmiit should never be considered or owned as pets, as the risk of attack to humans, especially women and children, was unacceptably high.

<sup>34</sup> Inuit traditional clothing made from furs and skins was sufficiently thick and strong to prevent most qimmiit bites from penetrating human skin.





At this time the role of the Inuk male as a provider was the sole purpose of nurturing and protecting our family and community and that was very quickly obliterated with single gun shots held to our dogs, our only means of transportation and hunting. We took pride in our roles as hunter-gatherers and that was all we had left in our identities. Our mobility rights were taken away from us.<sup>36</sup>

Both hunters and their families suffered terribly as a result of the loss of qimmiit. There were not enough jobs in the settlements, and families became dependent on inadequate social assistance payments and expensive store-bought food that was not sufficiently nutritious to meet their dietary requirements. Many Inuit told me they believed that the government was aware of the impact of the loss of qimmiit on Inuit culture, health and well-being, but that it did nothing to ease the situation. They also blamed many of the killings on the ignorance of officials concerning the care and handling of qimmiit. Inuit were particularly critical of Qallunaat who had no knowledge of the negative impacts of chaining qimmiit on the behaviour of working animals. Inuit also expressed both frustration and remorse—frustration that they could not understand why so many qimmiit were shot, especially those in harness, hiding under homes or those that in their opinion did not pose a real safety or disease threat; and remorse that they did not do more to stop the killings. In many cases, their failure to act stemmed from *ilira*, a mixed feeling of awe and fear of Qallunaat, whose intentions and behaviour were not clear to Inuit.

The events described above have come to be called *qimmiijaqtauniq*, which means literally “many dogs (or dog teams) being taken away or killed,” and is often translated as “the dog slaughter.” Beginning in the late 1990s, a number of Inuit publicly charged that the dog killings were carried out by the RCMP under government orders, so that they would lose their mobility and any possibility of returning to their traditional way of life. In 2005, the federal government rejected a parliamentary committee’s advice to call an independent inquiry into the dog killings, and instead asked the RCMP to investigate itself. The Qikiqtani Inuit were very reluctant to participate in this investigation without assurances concerning the independence of the investigations and the handling of their testimonies.

The resulting *RCMP Sled Dogs Report* confirmed that hundreds and perhaps thousands of dogs were killed by RCMP members and other authorities in the 1950s and 1960s. However, as a detailed analysis of the resulting RCMP report prepared by this Commission points out, the RCMP took an overly legalistic approach to their investigation.<sup>37</sup> Their investigators only looked for evidence of a government conspiracy or unlawful behaviour in the actions of the RCMP in killing qimmiit. Unfortunately, they did not go beyond these two concerns to consider other issues such as the inappropriateness of the law under which qimmiit were killed, or the many ways in which the killings were related to the relocations that were occurring at the time. The authors also dismissed Inuit memories of the killings as false, or arising from faulty memories, and condemned Inuit leaders who brought the incidents to public notice as being motivated by a desire for monetary compensation.

<sup>36</sup> Testimony and submission in Inuktitut.

<sup>37</sup> See *QTC Review of the RCMP Sled Dogs Report* (2006).

As the QTC analysis of the RCMP report notes, Inuit had no access to decision-makers and limited access to local officials. As a result, in many cases Inuit were not given any reasons why their dogs were shot, and when explanations were provided they were likely to be incomplete and / or badly translated.<sup>38</sup> It was therefore quite reasonable for Inuit to draw a connection between the killing of their sled dogs and the detrimental effects of centralization, namely the loss of their ability to move back to the land; increasing reliance on a cash economy; and the exclusive concentration of services in settlements.

At the same time, the QTC study shows that the killings went on far too long to be the result of a secret plan or conspiracy, and that they began—in the mid-1950s at Iqaluit—several years before the federal government adopted a formal centralizing policy. However, the dog ordinance was completely consistent with standard government policy that Inuit must, at their own expense, accommodate newcomers’ needs and wants. While the law was clear to those who enforced it, to hunters it was illogical, unnecessary and also harmful; in addition, it was not consistently or predictably applied. Inuit and dogs had existed together for uncounted generations without such restrictions being necessary. It is clear that the Government of Canada failed in its obligations to Inuit when it placed restrictions on their use of dogs without providing the means to make those restrictions less onerous or involving Inuit directly in finding solutions.

### Health Care and the Separation or Loss of Family Members

Relocations to settlements were not the only moves that dislocated the lives of Inuit between 1950 and 1975. Medical strategies intended to improve Inuit health by removing patients to southern hospitals succeeded in their primary goal but inflicted lasting damage on many individuals and their families.

Before the Second World War, health treatment in the Qikiqtani region, other than traditional Inuit care, was limited to one small hospital at Pangnirtung, and otherwise to services provided by the RCMP, missionaries, the HBC, and annual visits by shipboard medical teams, primarily for injuries. The impetus for improvements in health services in the region arose from the general modernization of healthcare across Canada, as well as from the government’s somewhat belated reaction to reports by missionaries, researchers, bureaucrats and American military personnel about high mortality rates among Inuit. By the mid-1960s, nursing stations provided basic health care in all settlements and ever fewer visits to *ilagiit nunagivaktangit*.

After 1950, medical personnel on the new medical patrol ship *CGS C.D. Howe* screened Inuit for tuberculosis and other infectious diseases or ailments, and those found to be infected or sick were removed without notice for indefinite stays in southern hospitals. Individuals who refused to be screened or were known to be sick were sometimes tracked down at their *ilagiit nunagivaktangit* by the ship’s helicopter. Those sent south for treatment often endured weeks on board the ship before they spent many months or years in treatment, far away from their families.

During the QTC hearings, many Inuit spoke of the terror and sadness they experienced when

<sup>38</sup> The *RCMP Sled Dogs Report* notes that: “Many former members reported instances where they gave a lengthy explanation to the Inuit for a decision being made, only to witness the interpreter reduce it to several sentences. The assumption by the members was that the interpreter conveyed only the decision, not the explanation.” (*The RCMP and the Inuit Sled Dogs (Nunavut and Northern Quebec: 1950–1970)*, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2006, p. 46)



they were sent away to hospitals and sanatoria, often without being able to say goodbye to their families. Jonah Apak of Clyde River remembered:

I was one of the people sent out by the *C.D. Howe* for TB. We had no choice but to go for medical purposes. At the front of the *C.D. Howe* ship, there was a section. They segregated the Inuit to the area where it was the bumpiest. We were treated like lower class people. We were where there was a lot of movement. When we were in the middle of the sea, it was really dark at night.<sup>39</sup>

Like other Inuit children, Jonah was forbidden to speak Inuktitut in the school he attended while he was being treated. Children were essentially orphaned at the tuberculosis hospitals or sanatoria in the South. They were subjected to disciplinary measures, such as spankings, being hit, force-fed or tied to their beds for hours on end, actions that they would never had experienced at home. On top of all this, officials and institutions also managed to lose or mix up records, which meant that some people—children and adults—were not returned to their *ilagiit nunagivaktangat* or their own districts. Children who returned had often lost their ability to speak Inuktitut, and were unable to communicate with their parents or grandparents. In some cases, children lost years of parental teachings that were necessary for survival on the land. The result was a profound sense of cultural shock and dislocation both down south and when people returned, as Jonah explained:

I was in a confusing situation. I was in two different worlds. I was treated like I was not Inuk. [...] I didn't know what I was.

They sent us back to our camp. I thought I was a southerner. I didn't want to come back. I didn't like the tundra and the house. [...] I had to get to know my culture again.<sup>40</sup>

In some cases, the journey home was longer than the treatment itself; some children never returned, or returned years later, when it was discovered that they had been kept by well-meaning hospital staff. Adults who returned from treatment were often unable to return to their former lives, and ended up dependent on government relief. While the government created “rehabilitation centres” to allow Inuit to be integrated—physically and socially—into communities in the Qikiqtani Region, the programs of the centres could be more appropriately described as acculturation, not rehabilitation.

Another tragic aspect of the policy to send Inuit south, rather than to build facilities in the North, related to the deaths of patients and the treatment of their remains. Some relatives were never informed that a family member had died down south until long afterward—if at all. Jaykolasié Killiktee told us:

In those days, when my grandmother left on the ship, I think my whole clan - especially our grandfather- was going through stressful times. The only time we could see our grandmother was the next year, or as long as it took to heal. There were no airplanes, no means of mail, no means of telephone, no means of communication with our loved ones. I remember them crying, especially the old

<sup>39</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>40</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

ones. It was a very traumatic and it had a profound impact on our people. Even when my older brother left, it felt as if we had lost our brother because we knew we wouldn't be in touch, only on very odd occasions we would get a letter. When my grandmother passed away, we were never told if she passed away, or where she passed away.<sup>41</sup>

Inuit with family members who died down south are still hurting from never having had the proper closure that could come from knowing where their relatives are buried or being given the opportunity to visit the graves.

## Development and Employment

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Part of the Canadian government's plan for bringing southern standards of living to the Qikiqtani region was to encourage economic development and thereby raise Inuit standards of living. One government official saw "hope" in the employment of Inuit because, in his words, they would "form a stable and cheerful labour force, one that does not demand premium wages to work in this austere land."<sup>42</sup>

The government looked primarily to mining and oil and gas production for future employment of Inuit, but the pace of development was very slow. By 1975, two mines on the Parry Channel were in the planning stages—Nanisivik and Polaris—and studies were also underway to exploit and ship oil and gas.

Officials and Inuit themselves also searched for development opportunities in the local economy. Cape Dorset provided an early example—which some other communities followed—of earnings from carving and printmaking. Its West Baffin Eskimo Co-op also pioneered commercial hunting and fishing camps. Construction of infrastructure in the settlements, including housing, airfields, diesel power generation plants and government buildings, provided some temporary manual labour jobs for men. Some Inuit women also found work as secretaries and clerks in government offices or as teacher assistants.

One important employment opportunity, albeit for a limited number of Inuit, was the position of special constable for the RCMP. Inuit special constables were crucial to the RCMP's work in the Qikiqtani region, acting as guides, hunters and interpreters, and helping bridge the gap between Qallunaat and Inuit culture. In addition to accompanying the RCMP on patrols, special constables were expected to work at the detachment, as were the rest of their families. Their wives would make and mend the officer's trail clothing, do household chores and sometimes prepare meals. If they had children, they too would be expected to help with the post chores. While special constables received salaries, there is no indication that other members of their families were always paid for their work. In addition, family members had to cope without the support of their husbands and fathers while the special constables were away on patrol for extended periods.

Inuit expressed a number of different opinions about economic development during our hearings.

<sup>41</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>42</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG 22, Indian and Northern Affairs, A-1-a, Vol. 1339, File 40-8-23, Report on Employment of Northern People, 1960.



Some spoke of the importance of even temporary wages for raising their standard of living. Mikisiti Saila of Cape Dorset described how he was encouraged to make carvings from walrus tusk:

I made a small ptarmigan and a couple of fish figures [...] and brought it back. It felt like I had so much money when I sold it. He paid me \$50 for that. My father and I were able to have tea and not just handouts. This was a great accomplishment.<sup>43</sup>

Others told me that they were mistreated or intimidated by managers and employers working for development enterprises and that some people were never paid for manual labour or services, such as guiding or interpreting, provided to government. Ham Kudloo of Pond Inlet told me about his experience as an interpreter on the CGS *C.D. Howe*:

I was thinking 'alright, I will be making money' [but] I found out later it was voluntary [...] I wasn't given one dollar [...] a thank you [...]. When I got older, I was thinking 'boy, I must have been very patient.'<sup>44</sup>

Several people testified that they were sent south (sometimes repeatedly) for training, especially in trades, but had few opportunities to apply their skills to paid employment in their home communities. They faced returning to jobs that were either seasonal or depended on their acceptance of frequent moves to follow jobs across the territories. Some Inuit also spoke about the negative impact of intensive aerial surveys and development on wildlife.

Overall, while some new jobs were created between 1950 and 1975, most of these were in government services, and there were too few opportunities to employ all those who moved to the settlements. As a result, the region became a place of high unemployment where formerly self-sufficient families often had little choice but to become dependent on social assistance.

### Poor Communications and Cross-Cultural Understanding

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One characteristic of all the changes I have described is the poor communications between Inuit and Qallunaat about what was taking place or what the changes were intended to achieve.

The ability of Inuit and Qallunaat to communicate effectively was challenged by a lack of a common language, and by profound cultural differences based on distinct worldviews and experiences. Most Qallunaat went to the Arctic on short-term contracts, some for an adventure, but almost all as a way to advance their careers quickly. Very few stayed for more than two to three years. The high turnover rate meant that there was a continuous loss of corporate memory, including knowledge of which approaches or decisions were successful and which were not. Many employees did not stay long enough to see or be aware of the effects of their work, whether good or bad. Even though the environment and culture were completely foreign to them, most Qallunaat thought they knew better than Inuit, who lacked the perceived benefits of a southern education. Qallunaat had no need to learn Inuktitut and saw no benefit in doing so:

<sup>43</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>44</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

English was the language of government, education and business. Inuit, however, learned English, more often than not by necessity or through formal schooling, work or southern medical treatment. Inuit had little power to make Qallunaat listen and were also less inclined, due to cultural norms, to challenge assumptions and opinions expressed by the dominant group. As Simeonie Akpalialuk of Pangnirtung told me:

Our people were conditioned by the missionaries, by the RCMP, to feel inferior. They developed a superiority-inferiority complex. I don't know, maybe to control them. That's why you heard many times 'we grew up fearing the police, fearing the white person'; just the ordinary white person. We couldn't approach them. To us they were the big white man and that is the kind of conditioning and thinking we were brought up with.<sup>45</sup>

Qallunaat quickly learned to take advantage of this deference to authority in order to ensure Inuit acquiesced to their wishes. Even when Inuit clearly disagreed or refused the proposed request, Qallunaat would apply pressure tactics such as warnings and threats to obtain the desired results.

Very few police officers, government administrators and bureaucrats charged with modernizing the Qikiqtani region from 1950 to the 1970s attempted to fully understand Inuit culture or even the Inuit language. Their efforts were generally limited to supervising the translation of rules and simple instructions into Inuktitut, with varying levels of effectiveness. RCMP officers gave translation roles to special constables who had a partial understanding of English and no experience with Canada's interrelated systems of government and justice. Inuit children were expected to translate foreign concepts and complicated documents for their parents. On many occasions, the government used Inuktitut to preach Canadian values to its internal colony. An ambitious effort was the 1964 *Q-Book*, *Qaujivaallirutissat*, a complete reworking of the former *Eskimo Book of Wisdom*. It clearly placed Inuit experiences in the "old days" and instructed Inuit about Canadian habits and institutions.

Some government representatives made attempts to bridge cultural and linguistic divides by giving Inuit a voice in meetings with senior officials. However, for various reasons<sup>46</sup>, Inuit generally avoided participation in government-organized forums that followed perplexing rules of procedure and systemically favoured Qallunaat ideas and predetermined government priorities and outcomes.

Throughout the period, Qallunaat demonstrated a sense of cultural superiority and a belief that their role was to lead Inuit as quickly as possible into the "modern" world. The patronizing position of Qallunaat, interspersed with actions that showed, at different times, hostility, indifference or romanticism toward Inuit culture, made it very difficult to engage in meaningful dialogues about government policies that were having such a deep impact on Inuit lives. Given the lack of dialogue, it is not surprising that many Inuit drew their own conclusions about government intentions, policies and actions, such as the widespread belief that the killings of qimmiit were part of a deliberate policy to force them to remain in the permanent settlements.

<sup>45</sup> Testimony in English.

<sup>46</sup> Including astute assessments of the wisdom of challenging authorities in public venues and avoiding the negative consequences that would inevitably result.



## ***Saimaqatigiingniq: The Way Forward***

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As the Commission visited the communities in the Qikiqtani region, we heard strong messages—not only about traumatic past experiences, but also about the need for healing and reconciliation. Many participants recommended concrete steps that can and should be taken to allow Inuit to move forward into a more promising future.<sup>47</sup>

After completing our first round of community visits, we held a workshop with staff and members of the Executive of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), as well as the QTC’s historical research team. This workshop identified a wide range of further recommendations. The main themes that emerged from both the workshop and our community visits were: acknowledgement; historical awareness; healing; meaningful involvement; cross-cultural training; and better communication. These themes are organized into four categories of detailed recommendations, as presented below.

In summary, these recommendations are:

- The Government of Canada should acknowledge that the effects of many of its decisions led to unnecessary hardship and poor social, health and education outcomes for Inuit, and both southern Canadians and younger Inuit should learn more about the changes that occurred in the 1950 to 1975 period in the Qikiqtani region. Concrete steps to promote healing for those affected by some important events in the period, including forced relocations and medical evacuations, are detailed below in the section on Acknowledging and Healing Past Wrongs.
- To reduce the likelihood of past mistakes being repeated, Inuit governance must be strengthened so that political, social and economic decisions truly reflect Inuit culture and needs. Some of the ways this can be accomplished are detailed in the Strengthening Inuit Governance section below.
- Despite many political, economic and social changes in the twentieth century, Inuit have retained their distinct culture. As described in the Strengthening Inuit Culture section below, they are one of the founding peoples of Canada with a culture that should be celebrated, strengthened and made better known to other Canadians.
- The historical legacy in the Qikiqtani region includes a number of serious social ills, such as alcohol and substance abuse, unhealthy diets, high unemployment, low rates of graduation, high crime rates, and insufficient and substandard housing. The section below on Creating Healthy Communities describes a variety of culturally appropriate steps that

<sup>47</sup> Some of the recommendations made by witnesses at our hearings did not fall within our mandate, and so could not be included.





was a “C.” Notably, 53% strongly or somewhat disagreed that they are “generally aware of the realities of life for the Inuit in the Canadian Arctic.” It follows from this that Canadians are also relatively unaware of what has been happening in the North since the 1950s. Indeed, for most, the fifties, sixties and seventies were decades of national optimism and relative prosperity, in stark contrast to the reality lived by most Inuit.

The work of this Commission is an opportunity to help increase public understanding of a dramatic transformation that happened within the lifetime of anyone over the age of 35. It is equally important that all Inuit have access to the testimonies, documents and reports of the Commission to understand the life-stories of Elders. I therefore recommend that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association give priority to making the QTC’s historical collection accessible to the widest possible audience.

In the first part of this report, I mentioned the key role played by Inuit special constables in guiding, hunting and interpreting for RCMP members, and the unpaid work that their families contributed at the police detachments. RCMP members have been quick to acknowledge the importance of special constables. In 1995, a research group in British Columbia interviewed 157 former RCMP members who had served in the Qikiqtani region. Officers readily admitted how ill-prepared they were for northern service: "There was nothing in the manual. It was all learned by trial and error. Looking back, I probably wouldn't have survived there because you had to rely on other people. You could not be an individualist there."<sup>48</sup>

While the contributions of a few special constables have been recognized by the RCMP, I believe that the RCMP with involvement of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association should prepare a formal recognition of the role of all Inuit special constables and their families. As Elijah Panipakoocho of Pond Inlet commented in his testimony:

I think the government has to give a very big gesture of appreciation to the Inuit who gave most of their lives to assist [RCMP members]. ...if the RCMP had ever tried to do this without the assistance of Inuit they would have never survived, they would have been dead. [...] Those people have to be recognized—without their efforts, Canadian sovereignty would not have progressed to the point where it has today.<sup>49</sup>

In my earlier account of the closing of communities and the relocations of Inuit, I did not describe the Dundas Harbour relocations, because they took place between 1934 and 1947, outside the time period of the QTC mandate. However, I did hear testimony from one of the few remaining relocatees, as well as from the descendants of those who were moved, and it is clear that there is still a strong need to understand the event and support healing.

Briefly, what happened is as follows. In 1934, the Hudson Bay Company, which was anxious to place posts in the High Arctic, obtained government permission to move 52 Inuit from three locations on Baffin Island to Dundas Harbour on Devon Island, where they were expected to trap and trade for two years. The relocation was not a success. Pangnirtung families were returned

<sup>48</sup> QTC transcript from the raw tapes of *Qimmit: A clash of two truths*. Produced by Piksuk Media and the National Film Board.

<sup>49</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.



memories.<sup>52</sup>

Finding and visiting the graves of loved ones would help provide closure for families, and the Government of Canada should provide financial assistance to make this possible.

## Recommendations

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1. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association should formally present the full QTC report to the Government of Canada and request a formal acknowledgement of the report's findings.
2. The QTC historical collection (reports, database and testimonies) should be made accessible to all participants and anyone interested in understanding and presenting an accurate picture of the Qikiqtani region's history.
3. The QIA and the RCMP should formally recognize the contributions of Inuit Special Constables and their families to the work of the RCMP in the region.
4. The Government of Canada should set up a Dundas Harbour Relocation Trust Fund to allow descendants of families separated as a result of this relocation to travel between Cape Dorset and Arctic Bay for periodic family visits.
5. The Government of Canada should provide funding for on-site healing programs for the families affected by the closing of Kivitoo, Padloping and South Camp (Belcher Islands) communities.
6. The Government of Canada should defray the costs of allowing Inuit to locate and visit the burial sites of family members who died in southern Canada during medical treatment, in order to provide closure for those families.

## b) Strengthening Inuit Governance

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### Direction for Change

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- *Ensure that the Governments of Nunavut and Canada provide Inuit with the means and opportunities to ensure that their unique needs and cultural priorities are fully addressed when the Governments of Nunavut and Canada make political, social and economic decisions affecting Inuit.*

### Case for Change

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Qikiqtani Inuit were self-governing prior to centralization. Well into the twentieth century, Inuit could go about their day-to-day lives as hunters with limited exposure to Canadian laws and institutions. As we have seen, this situation changed dramatically following the Second World War. Decisions affecting every aspect of Inuit life, including hunting restrictions, compulsory

<sup>52</sup> Testimony and submission in Inuktitut.



I believe an important step toward redressing this situation should be a formal acknowledgement by the Nunavut Legislative Assembly that, in accordance with the intention of the Nunavut land claims negotiation, Inuit goals and aspirations can and should be advanced through the Government of Nunavut, working collaboratively with Inuit organizations. Inuit make up about 85% of the population of Nunavut, and this fact should be reflected in a special status that also respects the needs and constitutional rights of the minority Qallunaat population. The same principle is applied in Quebec, where Francophone goals and aspirations are given priority because they constitute about 80% of the province's population.

It follows from this principle that the Government of Nunavut should conduct its day-to-day operations in keeping with its obligations and responsibilities to Inuit under the NLCA. One of these obligations, set out in Article 32, is that the Government must provide Inuit "with an opportunity to participate in the development of social and cultural policies, programs and services, including their method of delivery," and that such policies, programs and services must "reflect Inuit goals and objectives." As I discuss below, meaningful consultation and participation must be improved to fully implement this provision.

The Government of Nunavut also has special obligations to Inuit under Section 35 of the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, and under subsequent Supreme Court of Canada decisions. *Guerin* (1984)<sup>56</sup> and *Sparrow* (1990)<sup>57</sup> created and described a duty of the Crown to act as a fiduciary in its dealings with Aboriginal peoples, and justify its conduct when protected rights are interfered with or infringed. The Court also emphasized that Aboriginal rights must be interpreted flexibly in a manner that is "sensitive to the aboriginal perspective." These rulings underline the necessity for the Government of Nunavut to consult with and fully involve Inuit in all decision making.

Under Article 23, the NLCA includes the objective of increasing Inuit participation in government employment to a representative level, which means about 85 percent Inuit employment in all occupational groupings and sector levels. This goal is very far from being met: the current level of Inuit representation is around 45 percent. If the Government of Nunavut is to be an effective advocate for Inuit interests in its day-to-day operations, this situation must be rectified.

Nunavut has talented Inuit who continue to champion Inuit causes at the regional, territorial and federal levels. It is important for all Inuit to better understand how government functions, and how to become involved in decision-making. For example, while most Canadians find the division of responsibilities among orders of government, Aboriginal birthright corporations and bodies created by Land Claim Agreements confusing, the problem is acute in Nunavut. For these reasons, I recommend that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association establish a governance education program that will help community members develop skills and share knowledge about the principles of governance, government and Aboriginal rights. They can thereby strengthen their political and community engagement to achieve their aspirations.

Governance education needs to be complemented by a greater effort on the part of both the

<sup>56</sup> *Guerin v. The Queen* [1984] 2 S.C.R. 335

<sup>57</sup> *Sparrow v. The Queen* [1990] 1 S.C.R. 1075



federal and territorial governments to make their programs and services accessible at the local level. It can be unduly challenging for citizens to find out what is available to them. Front-line staff often lack information and training. As a result they are unable to give answers to basic questions, and take no initiative to track down the person who can provide the help requested. A fundamental shift to a client-oriented work culture is needed to address this issue. In this connection, I am encouraged by the Government of Nunavut's recent hiring of Government Liaison Officers outside the capital to facilitate access to government services.

Public consultation also needs to be significantly improved so that Inuit are given adequate notice of opportunities for input into proposed policies and legislation, and are provided with solid and easily understood background information about issues and options. Many community members are frustrated by consultation meetings at which they are not provided enough information, and which are not attended by the appropriate officials or politicians who could answer their questions and commit to addressing their concerns. Furthermore, the communities know from past experience that their comments and concerns might not be considered or incorporated in the final decision. In fact, many community members believe that the government has a preferred outcome and only conducts the consultations because they are a legal requirement. It is also not uncommon for the territorial and federal governments to conduct separate consultations on the same issue. This fractured approach is seriously problematic on many fronts, including the duplication of effort and resources by different levels of government and Inuit organizations. There is an unreasonable expectation that community members will have the time and patience to participate multiple times on the same issues.

To improve the quality of public consultation, I recommend that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association establish consultation guidelines for all private, public and research agencies to use in conducting consultations with Inuit. These guidelines would address Inuit issues and concerns, such as the need to incorporate Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in decision making, as discussed below.

Lack of understanding of Inuit culture and the Arctic environment contributed to mistakes made by Qallunaat in the Qikiqtani region in the period examined by the QTC. Given the large number of transient government employees in Nunavut, improved cross-cultural understanding is still a fundamental issue. Many public servants display a lack of awareness of Canadian Arctic history and Inuit culture, and of the day-to-day reality of Inuit lives. For these reasons, I recommend that the Governments of Nunavut and Canada, assisted by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, develop and deliver cultural training to all government employees whose work affects the Inuit.

Over the many centuries that Inuit have lived in the Arctic, they have acquired a profound understanding of their environment, and how to live successfully in that environment and with each other. From this experience they have developed a unique body of learning and understanding called Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ). It includes what is sometimes called Inuit Traditional Knowledge, or Traditional Ecological Knowledge, which is practical knowledge, such as how to navigate in a storm or identify a male or female polar bear by its tracks. IQ is more than this, however: it is "not only the action of doing things, but also why they are done as they are...[it is] the integration of encompassing worldview, value-based behaviour, ecological

knowledge and environmental action.”<sup>58</sup> Given its past and present role in Inuit survival, I believe IQ and traditional knowledge must be respected and incorporated in all decision making in Nunavut.

Finally, at the federal level, I believe Canada should formally demonstrate its commitment to the right to self-determination of all its Aboriginal peoples, including Inuit, by endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, the Declaration outlaws discrimination against indigenous peoples, promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them, as well as their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own visions of economic and social development. Canada was one of only four states that voted against the Declaration in 2007. However, in the March 2010 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada announced its intention to endorse the Declaration “in a manner fully consistent with Canada's Constitution and laws.”<sup>59</sup> Given that the Declaration is, as the government itself has noted, an “aspirational” document, there is no impediment to endorsing it now without qualification, even if much remains to be accomplished before its goals are fully achieved in this country.

## Recommendations

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1. The Nunavut Legislative Assembly should formally assert that Nunavut and the Government of Nunavut were created by the Nunavut land claims negotiations as vehicles for Inuit self-government, and, therefore, that Inuit goals and aspirations can and should be advanced through the Government of Nunavut working collaboratively with Inuit organizations.
2. The Government of Nunavut should conduct its day-to-day operations in keeping with its obligations and responsibilities under the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* and section 35 of the Constitution.
3. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association should establish a program that will enable Inuit to develop and utilize the governance skills they will require to strengthen their political and community engagement in a civil society.
4. The governments of Nunavut and Canada should take all necessary action to make their programs and services for the people of Nunavut accessible at the local level.
5. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association should develop a framework (principles, policies and techniques) for all private, public and research agencies to use in conducting consultations with Inuit.

<sup>58</sup> George Wenzel, Fred Weihs, and Geoff Rigby, *The Use of Traditional Knowledge and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit in the Management of Wildlife in Nunavut: A Critical Review* (Iqaluit: Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, 2008), pp. 7–8, 13.)

<sup>59</sup> “Speech from the Throne,” 3 March 2010, accessed 1 September 2010, [www.discours.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1388](http://www.discours.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1388).

6. To ensure that Inuit culture is better understood by government employees whose work affects the Inuit, the Governments of Nunavut and Canada, assisted by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, should develop and deliver cultural training to all such employees.
7. The governments of Nunavut and Canada, and all Inuit organizations, should respect and incorporate Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Inuit Traditional Knowledge in all decision-making in Nunavut.
8. The Government of Canada should immediately endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples without qualifications.

## c) Strengthening Inuit Culture

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### Direction for Change

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- *Celebrate and strengthen Inuit culture, and make it better known to other Canadians.*

### Case for Change

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Despite the dramatic changes in their way of life over the last half-century, Inuit have displayed remarkable resilience in adapting to their new circumstances without losing their language and traditions. In the 2001 census, 85.6 percent of Inuit identified Inuktitut as their first language, and 79.2 percent stated that Inuktitut was the only or main language spoken at home. Customary skills also continue to be widely practiced: for example, the 1999 Nunavut Community Labour Force Survey found that 78 percent of Inuit men aged 15 to 54 participate in harvesting activity, at least occasionally.<sup>60</sup> The importance of celebrating and strengthening Inuit culture should be self-evident, not only to Inuit themselves, but also to other Canadians. Inuit values and knowledge, which have allowed them to live successfully in the Arctic, are unique and irreplaceable. John Amagoalik eloquently expressed the importance of transmitting this heritage, in an essay entitled “We Must Have Dreams”:

We must teach our children their mother tongue. We must teach them what they are and where they come from. We must teach them the values which have guided our society over the thousands of years. We must teach them the philosophies which go back beyond the memory of man....<sup>61</sup>

If Inuit culture is to thrive in the future, however, a number of challenges need to be addressed. One of these is the lack of effective instruction in Inuktitut. In his 2006 report, “The Nunavut Project,” Thomas Berger identified a fundamental weakness of the current model of education, as well as its consequences. A lack of Inuit teachers and Inuktitut curriculum means that, with only a few exceptions, Inuit children are taught in Inuktitut until Grade 3, at which point English becomes the primary language of instruction for all subjects, and Inuktitut is taught only as a second language when teachers are available. Because they do not have a solid grounding in

<sup>60</sup> Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., *Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society, 2005–2007*, p.20.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Berger, “*The Nunavut Project*”, p. 67.

Inuktitut when they begin learning English, they can lose fluency in their mother tongue. This loss is not compensated for by advanced fluency in English; on the contrary, Berger noted, “They end up without fluency or literacy in either language.”<sup>62</sup>

The implications for the future survival of Inuktitut and Inuit culture are disquieting. As Berger comments:

The Inuit of Nunavut are faced with the erosion of Inuit language, knowledge and culture. Unless serious measures are taken, there will over time be a gradual extinction of Inuktitut, or at best its retention as a curiosity, imperfectly preserved and irrelevant to the daily life of its speakers.<sup>63</sup>

Measures to ensure the continued transmission of Inuit values and traditional knowledge – Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) – are equally essential. Incorporating IQ in the education curriculum is one such measure. Regrettably, as Heather McGregor has recently pointed out in *Inuit Education and Schools in the Eastern Arctic*, “the prioritization of cultural sustainability and IQ through education was not included in the land claim agreement or in any other large-scale initiative associated with Inuit rights and benefits. The founders of Nunavut did not address how future generations would have access to Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.”<sup>64</sup> The result of this oversight, in the words of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.’s 2007 Report on Education in Nunavut, is that “Inuit culture in the Nunavut classroom still tends to be treated as décor and artifact rather than viewed as an integral foundation for all learning.”<sup>65</sup>

This situation is beginning to change. One important development is territorial legislation that addresses the importance of preserving IQ and Inuktitut. The 2008 *Inuit Language Protection Act* provides that the Government of Nunavut must “design and enable the education program to produce secondary school graduates fully proficient in the Inuit Language, in both its spoken and written forms.”<sup>66</sup> The *Education Act*, passed in the same year, proclaims as its first fundamental principle that “The public education system in Nunavut shall be based on Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.” It also stipulates that every student shall be given a bilingual education in the Inuit Language and either English or French.<sup>67</sup> The Department of Education has already issued a new curriculum framework based on the values and principles of IQ.<sup>68</sup> This framework is the basis of a long-term project to develop a made-in-Nunavut curriculum and materials for kindergarten through to Grade 12. The projected completion date is 2018–2019. (2019 is also the date by which Inuit Language instruction must be provided for all grades, under the provisions of the *Inuit Language Protection Act*.) I recommend that the Department of Education distribute the components of this curriculum to all communities as they are completed, and direct school officials to implement them as soon as

<sup>62</sup> Berger, “*The Nunavut Project*”, p.29.

<sup>63</sup> Berger, “*The Nunavut Project*”, p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> Heather E. McGregor, *Inuit Education and Schools in the Eastern Arctic* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), p. 166.

<sup>65</sup> *Saqqiqpuq: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education in Nunavut, Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society, 2005-2007* (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., 2007).

<sup>66</sup> *Inuit Language Protection Act*, Art. 8 (2) (a).

<sup>67</sup> *Education Act*, Art. 1(1) and 23 (1)

<sup>68</sup> Nunavut Department of Education, *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum* (Iqaluit: Nunavut Department of Education, Curriculum and Schools Division, 2007).



possible.

I also recommend that historical material from the QTC be included in the new Nunavut curriculum. Many witnesses who appeared before the Commission told me how reluctant they had been to tell their children about the traumatic events of the past, or how their own parents had kept silent. The lack of knowledge among Inuit youth about the events described in this report was clearly demonstrated in the sessions we held with secondary school graduates participating in the Nunavut Sivinuksavut program in Ottawa. These sessions also showed how interested young Inuit are in learning more about the events that changed the lives of their parents and grandparents and created the communities in which they now live.

Another complementary method of transmitting Inuit traditions and history between generations is through practice – by bringing Elders and others with Inuit knowledge together more often in places and contexts that make it possible to learn and share. Simonie Kaenerk of Hall Beach told me:

We have to educate the younger people [...] not just [about] hunting [but about] family life, how to get along with family members. [...] Traditional words are being lost. [...] We have to get this information from the Elders. We are not asking Elders enough about what happened in the past; that is why we are losing our traditional way of life.<sup>69</sup>

One way of increasing meaningful contacts between the generations is to bring Elders into schools as teachers. The Department of Education has already established a one-year Elders' Teachers' Certification Program, which will also have the benefit of increasing the number of Inuktitut-speaking teachers. There are a number of other creative possibilities, such as those recommended in a learning unit designed by two teachers in Igloolik, called *Anijaarniq: Introducing Inuit Landskills and Wayfinding*. In addition to interviews with Elders describing how they navigate, the unit emphasizes the importance of inviting Elders into the classroom to share their knowledge and experiences, and of going outside with them so that students can experience first-hand the skills they are describing.

Such activities complement other programs to take youth out on the land to learn traditional skills from Elders. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association's Traditional Camping Program provides this experience in 13 communities. I recommend that the Government of Nunavut develop more programs such as these to ensure that young people continue to learn from Elders, and that Elders become more involved in the daily lives of communities.

If Inuktitut is to be entrenched as the dominant language of Nunavut, it is important that adults be given the opportunity to learn it. Unfortunately, there are fewer adult language classes available now than there were before the creation of the territory. A second-language Inuktitut program exists in Iqaluit, but the cost can be prohibitive. I note that there is a very large disparity between federal funding of Inuktitut and French language programs. The federal Government annually funds French language training at the rate of \$3,400 per francophone in Nunavut, while Inuktitut receives only \$48.50 per Inuk.<sup>70</sup> I recommend that the governments of Canada and

<sup>69</sup> Testimony in Inuktitut.

<sup>70</sup> *Saqqiqpuq: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education in Nunavut*, p. 19.

Nunavut work together to develop and adequately fund programs that will give all Inuit and Qallunaat the opportunity to learn the Inuit Language.

Finally, I believe an effective way to celebrate Inuit history and culture and make it better known to all Canadians would be to create an Inuit History Month. The success of Black History Month has demonstrated the potential benefits of such an initiative. Fifty years ago, there was very little knowledge of the history and contributions of Blacks in Canada. Beginning in the 1950s, when various groups began to celebrate Black History Month, and particularly after 1995, when the Month was formally recognized by a resolution of the Canadian Parliament, that situation changed. Today, each February, a high proportion of Canadian schools have activities related to Black History Month, and the awareness of Black history and achievements has increased significantly. The rationale for the initiative, as set out by the Ontario Black History Society, is that:

African Canadian students need to feel affirmed; need to be aware of the contributions made by other Blacks in Canada; need to have role models; need to understand the social forces which have shaped and influenced their community and their identities as a means of feeling connected to the educational experience and their life experience in various regions in Canada. They need to feel empowered. The greater Canadian community needs to know a history of Canada that includes all of the founding and pioneering experiences in order to work from reality, rather than perception alone.<sup>71</sup>

These words apply equally to Inuit and their experiences, and an Inuit History Month could produce a comparable increase in awareness on the part of Inuit and all Canadians. Accordingly, I recommend that the Qikiqtani Inuit Association develop a program of events for an Inuit History Month, which could be launched as a pilot in Nunavut, and then extended to all of Canada.

## Recommendations

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1. The Government of Nunavut Department of Education should develop and distribute an Inuktitut and Inuit-based curriculum to all communities and direct school officials to implement it as soon as possible.
2. The Government of Nunavut's Department of Education should include historical material from the QTC reports in the Nunavut education curriculum.
3. The Government of Nunavut should develop and deliver more programs that actively promote intergenerational experiences between Elders and Inuit children and youth to ensure that young people continue to learn from Elders, and that Elders become more involved in the daily lives of communities.

<sup>71</sup> Rosemary Sadlier, "Why a Black History Month?", accessed 1 September 2010, [www.blackhistorysociety.ca/black\\_history\\_month\\_en\\_209cms.htm](http://www.blackhistorysociety.ca/black_history_month_en_209cms.htm).



4. The Governments of Canada and Nunavut should work together to develop and fund Inuit Language programs that will ensure that all Inuit and Qallunaat in Nunavut have the opportunity to learn the Inuit Language.
5. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association should initiate an Inuit History Month, launching the event in Nunavut and later extending it to all of Canada.

## d) Creating Healthy Communities

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### Direction for Change

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- *Ensure healthy communities by adequately addressing intergenerational trauma caused by historical wrongs, through appropriate health, nutritional, housing and environmental strategies.*

### Case for Change

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Many of the changes introduced by the Canadian government in the Qikiqtani region between 1950 and 1975 were intended to improve the health and living conditions of Inuit. The results have been decidedly mixed. While rates of tuberculosis and infant mortality have been lowered, they are still unacceptably high relative to the rest of Canada. Poor nutrition has replaced periods of starvation as a major health concern. Today 70 percent of Inuit preschoolers in Nunavut live in homes where there is not enough food.<sup>72</sup> Housing is in a state of crisis, and the territory is plagued by high rates of suicide, addiction and incarceration. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's most recent Community Well-Being Index shows a significant gap between the quality of life of Inuit communities relative to other Canadian communities. Inuit communities scored an average 62 out of a possible 100 points, in contrast to a score of 77 out of 100 for all other "non-Inuit" and "non-First Nations" communities. This disparity in well-being has narrowed since it was first calculated in 1981, but it is still unacceptably large.<sup>73</sup>

If the killing of qimmiit is a flash point for Inuit memories of the changes to which they were subjected, suicide is one of the most disturbing consequences of those changes. Suicide was all but unknown among previous generations of Inuit. There was only one recorded suicide in Nunavut in the 1960s. Today, the territory averages 27 suicides a year, and the suicide rate is about 10 times the national average. The rate of death by suicide among 15- to 24-year-old Inuit men in Nunavut is 28 times that of their peers Canada-wide.<sup>74</sup> The Working Group for a Suicide Prevention Strategy for Nunavut comments that "The Inuit transition from a low-suicide society to a high-suicide society in a very short period of time is almost without parallel elsewhere on

<sup>72</sup> Grace M. Egeland et al., "Food insecurity among Inuit preschoolers: Nunavut Inuit Child Health Survey, 2007–2008," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 182,2 ( 25 January 2010).

<sup>73</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, *First Nations and Inuit Community Well-Being: Describing Historical Trends (1981-2006)*, accessed 1 September 2010, [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/rs/pubs/cwb/cwbdcck-eng.asp](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/rs/pubs/cwb/cwbdcck-eng.asp).

<sup>74</sup> *Qaujijausimajuni Tunngaviqarniq: Using knowledge and experience as a foundation for action. A discussion paper on suicide prevention in Nunavut* (The Working Group for a Suicide Prevention Strategy for Nunavut, 2009), Appendix 1, accessed 14 September 2010, [www.gov.nu.ca/suicide/SP%20WG%20discussion%20paper%20E.pdf](http://www.gov.nu.ca/suicide/SP%20WG%20discussion%20paper%20E.pdf).

the planet.”<sup>75</sup> The factors influencing suicide rates are under intense scrutiny by academics in Canada and elsewhere, but it is plausible that Inuit youth are more vulnerable than many other groups due to the sheer number of factors —poverty, heavy drinking, cultural dislocation, low self-esteem etc.—known to be associated with suicide.

I have already described how settlement life brought Inuit into contact with alcohol and drugs for the first time, in the absence of highly developed social controls that are taken for granted in the South. Given the ongoing cultural dislocation and lack of employment opportunities, it should be no surprise that substance abuse continues to be a serious problem in Inuit communities, along with its consequences, including domestic violence and health issues such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Rates of heavy drinking in Nunavut are four times those in the rest of Canada. One 2001 report estimated that 30 percent of Nunavut’s expectant mothers drank significant amounts of alcohol while pregnant, and that 85 percent of their children showed symptoms of FASD.<sup>76</sup>

Smoking is another widespread addiction: an estimated 65% of Nunavummiut smoke daily – the highest rate in Canada. Smoking is a prime factor in Nunavut’s high rate of lung cancer; smoking by pregnant mothers is also associated with the territory’s high rates of infant mortality and low birth weight; and second-hand smoke contributes to the highest rate of lower respiratory tract infections among children in the world.<sup>77</sup>

Links between substance abuse and high rates of incarceration in Nunavut are well-known. As the 2009 Government of Nunavut Report Card points out, there are few culturally appropriate and local treatment facilities, and “With few diversion options, incarceration becomes the norm instead of the last resort.” In addition, the Report Card notes that “long wait times for court, sometimes up to five years, creates stress in homes that are already riddled with problems.” Several people interviewed for the report drew a link between waiting times for court and high suicide rates.<sup>78</sup>

Earlier, I spoke of the need for the Government of Canada to formally acknowledge its responsibility for the harmful historical acts described in the first part of this report. I believe it is equally important that it accept responsibility for the ongoing consequences of those acts. Accordingly, I recommend that the Government of Canada formally acknowledge that the high rates of suicide, substance abuse, incarceration and social dysfunction among Inuit are in part symptoms of intergenerational trauma caused by historical wrongs. This symbolic first step will clearly signal its commitment to help correct the mistakes it made over many decades.

As also noted earlier, the original intention of government planners was to bring the standards of living of the South to the North. Many actions and policies were inadequately resourced and poorly planned. They were destructive of Inuit culture and they rarely achieved the more laudable goals of improving material and health conditions. I believe the Government of Canada,

<sup>75</sup> *Qaujijausimajuni Tunngaviqarniq*, p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> *Qaujijausimajuni Tunngaviqarniq*, p. 13.

<sup>77</sup> T. Kovesi et al. “Heat Recovery ventilators prevent respiratory disorders in Inuit children,” *Indoor Air* 19,6 (December 2009),, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> *The GN Report Card: Analysis and Recommendations* (Iqaluit: North Sky Consulting Group, 2009), p. 32



as well as the Government of Nunavut, should commit to ensuring that all government health, social and education programs and services are available to the people of Nunavut on a basis equivalent to those taken for granted by Canadians in the South. As a recent editorial in *The Globe and Mail* rightly said, “Every Inuit life should be precious, as precious as the lives of other Canadians.”<sup>79</sup>

There is widespread recognition that the problems I have described above need urgent attention. The Government of Nunavut has approved a comprehensive Addictions and Mental Health Strategy, but as the 2009 Report Card comments, the strategy remains largely unimplemented. More specifically, the report notes that “Communities perceive government inaction in the provision of mental health programs and services, largely because of the lack of mental health nurses in most communities.”<sup>80</sup> Community consultations for the Suicide Prevention Strategy also highlighted the need for “more mental health positions, and greater efforts to attract and retain staff for the existing positions.”<sup>81</sup> An additional concern is that that few of the current mental health care workers are Inuit. As Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.’s 2008 report on the Nunavut health system points out, “Inuit wish to incorporate traditional practices and the wisdom of Elders into most aspects of contemporary health care, particularly those intensely personal conditions such as childbirth and mental health.”<sup>82</sup> This requires training and hiring more Inuit for such positions. I recommend that the governments of Canada and Nunavut take the necessary steps to ensure that sufficient Inuit social, mental health and addiction workers and programs are available to meet the needs of all Nunavut communities.

One of the inducements that brought Inuit into settlements during the 1950s and 1960s was the promise of free or low-rent housing. Many discovered that the number of houses was inadequate, most houses were too small, quality was poor and the costs increased. These problems have not gone away – on the contrary, they have now reached crisis proportions. Housing is expensive and in short supply. Statistics Canada reports that 54 percent of Nunavut residents live in “crowded” conditions, compared to the Canadian average of 7 percent. Overcrowding, combined with building design flaws and the fact that houses are kept virtually air-tight to conserve heat, contributes to the transmission of respiratory and other diseases.<sup>83</sup> As NTI’s report on the Nunavut health system notes, overcrowding can also contribute to high rates of violence in Inuit communities.<sup>84</sup> In addition to overcrowding, the list of problems compiled by the 2009 Government of Nunavut Report Card includes “long waiting lists for houses [...] unaffordable rents, the poor condition of the housing stock, houses that are unsuitable for the elderly or people with disabilities, and new housing designs that do not meet the needs of communities.”<sup>85</sup>

Hundreds of people live without adequate housing in the Qikiqtani region. As the 2009 Report Card notes, the Nunavut Housing Corporation can supply the necessary expertise to plan and

<sup>79</sup> “Canada’s child mortality disgrace,” *The Globe and Mail*, 17 May 2010.

<sup>80</sup> *The GN Report Card*, p. 26.

<sup>81</sup> Ellen Bobet, *Towards the development of a Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy: A summary report on the 2009 community consultations*, accessed 1 September 2010, [www.gov.nu.ca/suicide/report.pdf](http://www.gov.nu.ca/suicide/report.pdf).

<sup>82</sup> *Nunavut’s Health System*, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> T. Kovesi et al. “Heat Recovery ventilators prevent respiratory disorders in Inuit children”, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> *Nunavut’s Health System*, p. 10.

<sup>85</sup> *The GN Report Card*, pp. 22-23.

build the housing the territory requires, but the majority of funding will need to come from the federal government. The consequences of not committing the necessary money would be grave: “the housing problems will continue to grow and become even more detrimental to the social and economic foundation of Nunavut communities, and to Inuit self-reliance.”<sup>86</sup> I therefore recommend that the governments of Canada and Nunavut address Inuit housing needs through the provision of short-, medium- and long- term funding to ensure adequate and safe homes for all.

Despite the transition of Inuit to settlement life and a wage economy, the traditional land-based economy has not disappeared in Nunavut, and there are a number of important reasons why it should be encouraged to grow. One is that hunting and harvesting are essential components of Inuit culture and identity, as I have already discussed. Another is that country foods can contribute greatly to food security and better nutrition for Nunavummiut. Statistics Canada reports that in 2001, virtually half (49%) of all Nunavut households experienced food insecurity, defined as “not having enough food to eat due to lack of money.” This is seven times the rate for Canada as a whole. In low and lower-middle income Nunavut households, the rate for food insecurity is 68%.<sup>87</sup> Those who lack food security are compelled to buy lower-cost, nutritionally poor food that is contributing to increasing rates of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. In contrast, as the Government of Nunavut’s Framework for Action on Nutrition notes, “Inuit traditional foods have outstanding nutritional value and continued reliance on food from the land can help improve food security by providing a higher quality diet at lower cost.”<sup>88</sup> Finally, hunting and harvesting can provide significant support to local economies, and reduce dependence on government jobs and income support programs. In 2001, the Conference Board of Canada estimated that the traditional land-based economy was worth between \$40 and \$60 million annually.<sup>89</sup> For all these reasons, I recommend that the Government of Nunavut and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association work together to facilitate and promote Inuit participation in hunting, fishing and gathering practices. This should include greater efforts to publicize the harmful effects on Inuit of the 2009 European Union ban on seal imports, and to appeal that ban to the World Trade Organization.

Over the last decade, it has become increasingly apparent that Inuit and the Arctic environment are facing multiple threats from climate change and contaminants. Each year, permanent Arctic sea ice coverage has been decreasing, reducing access to game and generating concerns about longer-term consequences such as flooding of communities from rising sea levels. While Inuit know (and archaeologists have confirmed) that their ancestors adapted to changes in game availability and distribution resulting from climate shifts, a recent study of climate change impacts on Inuit in Nunavut points out, “The mobility that Inuit once possessed to move in response to shifts in the pattern and state of their resource base is no longer possible.”<sup>90</sup> Inuit

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>87</sup> Cited in Government of Nunavut, Department of Health and Social Services, “Nutrition in Nunavut: A Framework for Action,” accessed 1 September 2010, [www.gov.nu.ca/healthylivinginnunavut/nfe.pdf](http://www.gov.nu.ca/healthylivinginnunavut/nfe.pdf), p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Government of Nunavut, Department of Health and Social Services, “Nutrition in Nunavut,” p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., *Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society, 2005–2007*, p.20.

<sup>90</sup> Mark Nuttall et al., “Climate Change Impacts on Canadian Inuit in Nunavut,” *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment*, Section 12.3.2, in *The Encyclopaedia of Earth*, accessed 1 September 2010,



now live in permanent settlements. One of the resulting dangers is that they will become increasingly dependent on expensive and less nutritious store-bought food because country food cannot be secured.

The problem of environmental contaminants continues in the Arctic, both from southern sources and from resource development in the North. Living beings, including Inuit and Arctic land and marine mammals, have some of the world's highest levels of exposure to mercury and other toxic chemicals, including DDT and PCBs. These contaminants accumulate in the fat of animals at the top of the food chain, which are then consumed by Inuit. Normal freeze and thaw cycles release toxins gathered in annual snow accumulations into the same waters where Inuit hunt and fish. Resource development carries further environmental risks that Inuit are working to understand and manage.

There are powerful reasons – economic, scientific, cultural and practical – for Inuit and southern scientists to cooperate in studying the Arctic environment. As anthropologist Peter Bates explains in a recent article, Inuit and scientific approaches are markedly different in some respects, but each can complement the other.<sup>91</sup> Both sets of knowledge are often needed for broad environmental studies in the Arctic, especially when the interpretation of natural events and causal analysis concerning Arctic animals is contemplated or when health studies related are designed or interpreted.

As a result, the possibilities for meaningful collaborations between Inuit and scientists will increase. I would add that, for this to occur, the exchange needs to be two-way: Inuit need to be better informed about what science can offer in addressing issues such as the effects of toxic contaminant; and Qallunaat scientists need to understand the beneficial role that Inuit and their knowledge can contribute to scientific studies. It is also possible for scientific research to offer something that both the government and Inuit were seeking from the beginning of the modernizing period – local jobs for educated Inuit. I therefore recommend that the governments of Canada and Nunavut provide training and other support that will allow Inuit to actively participate in Arctic environmental studies and activities. Such training will not only add trained scientists and observers, but also provide additional employment opportunities for Inuit in communities and better research results.

## Recommendations

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1. The Government of Canada should formally acknowledge that the levels of suicide, addiction, incarceration and social dysfunction found in the Qikiqtani region are in part symptoms of intergenerational trauma caused by historical wrongs.
2. The governments of Canada and Nunavut should ensure that sufficient Inuit social, mental health and addiction workers and programs are available to meet the needs of all Nunavut communities.

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[www.eoearth.org/article/Climate\\_change\\_impacts\\_on\\_Canadian\\_Inuit\\_in\\_Nunavut](http://www.eoearth.org/article/Climate_change_impacts_on_Canadian_Inuit_in_Nunavut).

<sup>91</sup> Peter Bates, "Inuit and Scientific Philosophies About Planning, Prediction and Uncertainty," *Arctic Anthropology* 44, 2,(2007), p. 90.





## Conclusion

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I hope that this Commission marks the beginning of a new relationship, of *saimaqatigiingniq*, in which the two sides meet in the middle and are reconciled. This relationship must be between equal partners, who share the goal of ensuring the well-being of the Qikiqtani Inuit, and it must be built upon mutual respect and ongoing consultation. Only through continuous dialogue and engagement on all issues that could potentially impact the lives of Inuit can we achieve healing and reconciliation between the North and the South, governments and Inuit.

Thanks to the initiative and constant support of QIA, Inuit have had the opportunity to share their often painful experiences with fellow Inuit and southern Canadians, and to understand better how and why the historical failure of the Canadian government to consult Inuit before imposing new and often inappropriate policies and practices in the North has completely transformed their way of life.

My recommendations outline some key steps that I believe are required to build this new relationship. The first is awareness and acknowledgement of past wrongs, and commitment on both sides to collaborate in building a better future. The recommendations I have made on ways to strengthen Inuit culture and governance, and to ensure healthy communities, are based on the principle that the Qikiqtani Inuit must be fully empowered to decide their own future. They can find strength and resilience in their heritage of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and they must be given the capacity to decide for themselves how this heritage will shape their communities and their way of life. At the same time, the governments of Canada and Nunavut must ensure that Inuit have the modern supports and services that will help heal Nunavut's social and economic ills. For we must remember: achieving *saimaqatigiingniq* is in the interests not just of Inuit but of all Canadians who value this unique culture and wish to see it thrive.