Arctic Bay
(Ikpiarjuk)

Qikiqtani Truth Commission
Community Histories ***1950–1975***

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to the Inuit of the Qikiqtani Region. May our history never be forgotten and our voices be forever strong.

About This Report (2024 Edition)

This report was originally produced by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) from reports drafted by the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) in 2010 and published by QIA in 2013. In 2024, QIA updated the reports by reinstating footnotes, correcting official place names, making minor corrections to grammar and syntax, correcting maps, and changing some images. The Inuktitut versions also added footnotes.

Foreword and Introduction texts from the 2013 edition are found at the end of the 2024 report to provide context about the work of the QTC.

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Introducing Arctic Bay

(Ikpiarjuk)

The hamlet of Arctic Bay is known as Ikpiarjuk[i] in Inuktitut. The Inuktitut name means "pocket", which refers to the way the hamlet is nestled between tall hills. The community is located on the north shore of Adams Sound, off the coast of Admiralty Inlet on northern Baffin Island. King George V Mountain, located a couple of kilometres east, is a predominant feature in the landscape. People call the region Tununirusiq, which refers to the big mountain in front of Arctic Bay that faces south. The people of the region call themselves Tununirusirmiut.

Traditionally, Arctic Bay was of secondary importance to the region's Inuit and remained largely uninhabited until the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) established a post at Arctic Bay in 1936. At the same time, the government[ii] moved several Inuit families to the Arctic Bay area from Kinngait, Pangnirtung, and Pond Inlet. Over the following decades Arctic Bay increased in number of residents but remained largely a qallunaat enclave. The majority of Tununirusirmiut continued to live on the land, only travelling to Arctic Bay for supplies when the annual ship arrived, for medical attention, or for trade and other settlement activities.

In the 1950s, however, the federal government sought to bring modern services to Inuit in the area. By the end of the 1960s, the settlement included a school, hostel, twenty-two houses, and a small set of government offices. As more Tununirusirmiut moved to the community, Inuit and government agents saw new problems arising, such as the potential for clashes between people and qimmiit.[iii] Residents formed a Settlement Council in 1967.

The mineral potential of Arctic Bay was known as early as 1910. In 1957, a large deposit of lead and zinc was discovered that eventually became the location for the Nanisivik mine. The predictions of mineral wealth were realized in the 1970s with the opening of the mine approximately 20 kilometres northeast of Arctic Bay at Strathcona Sound. Nanisivik had a tremendous impact on the community and its economy. Opportunities for wage employment transformed the role of money, affecting Tununirusirmiut hunting practices and social structures.

i The report uses current geographical place names, with Inuktitut place names added.
ii The term "government" for this report generally includes include all the bodies that existed under Canadian federal legislation to serve and control people, mostly Inuit, in the Qikiqtani Region.
iii Qimmiit means *Inuit sled dogs* (singular version of the Inuktitut word is qimmiq).

Arctic Bay received hamlet status in 1976. In 2011, its population was 823.[1] Today, the community is renowned for the quality of its whalebone and soapstone carvings, which depict subsistence activities and locally known animals and birds.[2] Hiking, camping, and fishing are popular local activities that can be enjoyed in nearby Sirmilik National Park.

Taissumani Nunamiutautilluta (On the Land)

The term "Taissumani nunamiutautilluta" means "when we lived on the land." It reaches back thousands of years. The end date depends on the community, but it is generally in the 1950s to early 1960s when most Inuit were living in government-chosen settlements and participating in the cash economy. During this time, the Inuktut term *ilagiit nunagivaktangit* is a more accurate expression for the places Inuit called home and qallunaat (non-Inuit) named "camps." Ilagiit nunagivaktangit were places regularly used for hunting, harvesting and gathering. Inuit groups traditionally had several ilagiit nunagivaktangit, which allowed them to move to follow game.

ILAGIIT NUNAGIVAKTANGIT

The community of Arctic Bay is located on the northern shore of Adams Sound, off the coast of Admiralty Inlet. It is situated between high, glaciated cliffs and a small bay. Long, narrow fiords, inlets, and bays form the coastlines. Thaw generally occurs in mid-July, with freeze-up beginning in October. The area is technically located within a polar desert, which means that it receives very little precipitation in the form of rain or snow.

The people who lived on the north end of Baffin Island (areas near the present-day settlements of Arctic Bay and Pond Inlet) and those who lived near Igloolik share a cultural unity based on geography. Early anthropological work identified all the people in this region as Iglulingmiut (meaning generically Inuit in culture and language), although Inuit note distinctions among themselves. They point to differences in language and material culture that exist between the various groups dispersed throughout the area. Evidence suggests the primary population and cultural heart of the region was found west of Navy Board Inlet and south of Eclipse Sound. The Inuit of this area were known as Tununirmiut, meaning "the people of a shaded or shadowy place." The reference to a shaded or shadowy place reflects the mountainous landscape of the region.[3]

Until recently, the Arctic Bay area had a very small population.[4] In 1939, for example, an estimated population of 70 people were associated with six ilagiit nunagivaktangit.[5] People coming from other parts of the Qikiqtani Region accounted for increases in the population from the 1940s onwards. In the same period, however, some families moved away to Pond Inlet, Iqaluit, and Igloolik. In 1967, after almost all ilagiit nunagivaktangit were abandoned or moved closer to Arctic Bay, and the population of the settlement had reached 168, with only 9 qallunaat.[6]

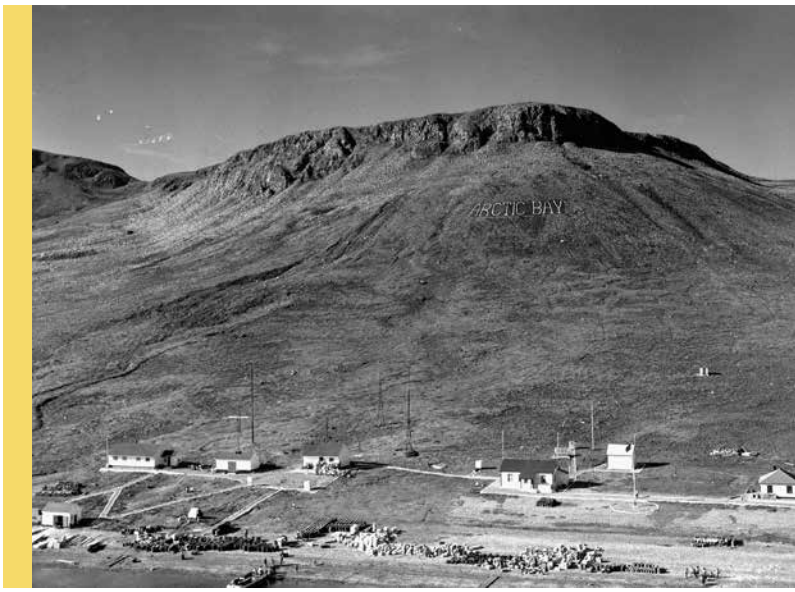
Traditionally, caribou were very important for Tununirusirmiut. Not only were they a preferred food source, but caribou hide was essential in the production of garments. Inland caribou hunting historically occurred on Bylot Island and in the interior of northern Baffin Island during the summer months when the hides were at their best for clothing production. In the winter and spring, caribou were hunted for food along the coasts or during the long overland journeys to Pond Inlet or Igloolik.[7]

Ringed seals were another important species. They were primarily used for food and as a basic material for tents, heating and lighting, but their skins were also traded. Ringed seals were hunted throughout the region in fiords, bays, inlets and at the floe edge. While less abundant, the bearded seal was also hunted at the floe edge during spring break up and in the open waters during the summer months. Their skin was valuable to Tununirusirmiut, as it was used to make rope and boot soles. Occasionally, in summer, harp seals were taken in the Admiralty Inlet area.[8]

Narwhals, hunted primarily in the summer, were an important source of food for qimmiit while their tusks were used for trade with whalers and later with the HBC. Tununirusirmiut also considered the skin, fresh or purposefully aged, a delicacy. White foxes, wolves, and polar bears also played a role in Tununirusirmiut trading activities, with polar bears being an important source of income and prestige for hunters, as well as a source of materials for winter clothing. Arctic char was the preferred freshwater fish. Sculpin was only fished in times of scarcity. Birds, wildfowl, hares, eggs, and berries all supplemented the Tununirusirmiut diet.

EARLY CONTACTS

Sir William Edward Parry visited Arctic Bay in 1820. Its current name references the whaling vessel *Arctic* that surveyed the area in 1872 under the command of Captain William Adams.[9] Until the 20th century, however, there were relatively few interactions between Tununirusirmiut and qallunaat when compared with other parts of the Eastern Arctic. Tununirusirmiut encountered whalers from Scotland, England, and America during the 19th century, but no whaling stations were set up in the area. Instead, a small station for hunting, securing supplies, rendering blubber, and trading with local Inuit was established at Pond Inlet.[10]



Department of Transport weather station and HBC post at Arctic Bay, [1951].
Credit: *National Film Board of Canada. Photothèque / Library and Archives Canada / PA-189160.*

The Canadian government expedition ship (also named *Arctic*), captained by Joseph-Elzear Bernier was iced in over winter at Arctic Bay in 1910–11. Bernier's expedition named many places in the area. While there, the ship's crew spelled out "Arctic Bay" in stone on the cliffs overlooking the entrance to the bay. Their mark can still be seen today.[11]

In 1926, the HBC established a trading post at Arctic Bay under the name Tukik, but it was closed the following year with the organization of the Arctic Islands Game Preserve (AIGP).[12] The AIGP was established in 1926 by an order-in-council and encompassed the high arctic islands, northwestern Baffin Island, the islands as far west as northeastern Banks Island, and a small portion of the mainland. Created in association with other conservation initiatives at the time, the AIGP aimed to protect

muskox in the region, while restricting qallunaat from hunting, trapping, trading, and trafficking inside its boundaries.[13] The game preserve also called attention to Canadian sovereignty claims in the north by demonstrating a form of functional administration in the Arctic Archipelago.[14] The onset of the Depression and the drop in the price of furs led to a relaxation in AIGP restrictions because the government was focused on the economy.[15] In 1936, the HBC returned to Arctic Bay, establishing a permanent post there.[16] The AIGP was eventually disbanded in 1966 by the Northwest Territories Council when the area was brought under the same legislative framework as the Northwest Territories.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF LIFE

Participation in whaling in the 19th century led to changes in the hunting and mobility patterns of Tununirusirmiut and other groups of Iglulingmiut. The whaling station at Pond Inlet drew Inuit to the area while at the same time the whalers' demand for polar bear skins resulted in a northward drift as hunters followed the animals.[17] Tununirusirmiut regularly made the trek to Pond Inlet in hopes of acquiring trade goods such as tobacco, guns, ammunition, and fox traps. These new technologies were eventually adapted into daily life, making continued trade necessary. The desire to travel to qallunaat enclaves was further ingrained with the arrival of trade companies such as the HBC. Tununirusirmiut wanted to be near trading posts, but they also relied on hunting for subsistence, which meant that they had to continue to hunt over large areas. Tununirusirmiut families travelled widely and often, adjusting their patterns of movement with that of their game and opportunities to trade.[18] Today, many Tununirusirmiut still make long journeys for hunting and to visit relatives in Igloolik and Pond Inlet.

The reopening of the post at Arctic Bay in 1936 aimed to serve ilagiit nunagivaktangit in the area that had been trading in Pond Inlet. The new post significantly reduced the amount of travel time required for trade. It also freed up time for trapping, reduced the amount of time spent hunting for food for qimmiit, and enticed more families to establish ilagiit nunagivaktangit in the area.[19]

Sangussaqtauliqtilluta (1936–1958)

The term "Sangussaqtauliqtilluta" means "the time when we started to be actively persuaded, or made to, detour or switch modes." Combinations of both externally driven and local pressures detached individuals, families, and kin groups from life on the land and moved them towards government-directed settlements.

While the newly reopened HBC post at Arctic Bay attracted some families that had previously traded at Pond Inlet to stay closer to Arctic Bay, the overall population in the area stayed constant. However, it increased in 1936, when families were moved to the area by the HBC. In 1934, a government-approved relocation scheme, overseen by the HBC, saw 52 Inuit and 109 qimmiit from Kinngait, Pangnirtung, and Pond Inlet transported to a newly established HBC post at Dundas Harbour, on Devon Island. The government expected them to develop local trapping and trading economies in the area. However, the HBC found access to the post via the harbour problematic, and after two years, the post was closed. The Pangnirtung families were returned home, but the others were moved to Arctic Bay.[20] In 1937, several families were once again relocated, this time to a new HBC post at Fort Ross. When this site also proved unsuitable, they were relocated to Spence Bay, on the Boothia Peninsula.[21] Several of these families moved back to Arctic Bay.

Dog team runs through whiteout near Arctic Bay, [1969]. ***Credit:*** *NWT Archives, Northwest Territories: Department of Information fonds/G-1979-023: 1451.*

The relocations had a lasting impact on the people. For Inuit, the loss of home is more than the loss of a dwelling; it is a disruption of the vital relationship between people, the land, and animals. The government failed to address the social and psychological impacts of these moves on the people, and many continue to suffer from feelings of displacement and loss today. In April 2008, Rhoda Tunraq spoke to the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) about her mother's experience with the relocations.

> They got moved to Devon Island, and they were happy there as a family. When they moved to Arctic Bay, the families started dying. There is a saying in Inuit, "they cut off the life," so I feel that they were cut short in their life. My mother used to say that. She wanted to go back, but her relatives—her husband and in-laws—died. Their happiness in the camp was cut off; when they moved here, she was sad. It was not her original place, and she did not want to live here.[22]

The government had promised families the opportunity to return to their original homes. For the majority, these promises were unfulfilled. Juda Oqittuq's memory of his parents' experience reflects this. "They were told they were able to return. It seems to be just words, not carried out."[23] Instead, many of the families from Kinngait and Pond Inlet were sent to Arctic Bay in an attempt to support the HBC post there. The HBC was encouraging "movement into a region that had little else to recommend it."[24] This amplified the population in an area that had, historically, been largely unoccupied.

The influx of the relocated families corresponded with an increase in qallunaat agencies at Arctic Bay. A Roman Catholic mission was established in 1937, which offered basic education to local Inuit children.[25] During the Second World War, a US weather station was constructed.[26] This station was the most northerly installation established by the United States in Canada's Arctic during the war.[27] In September 1943, responsibility for the station was transferred to the Canadian Department of Transport (now Transport Canada), and it was eventually closed in 1958. By 1950, Arctic Bay had developed into a settlement, primarily populated by qallunaat, that was visited annually by the RCMP detachment out of Pond Inlet. The majority of Tununirusirmiut, however, continued to live in ilagiit nunagivaktangit throughout the region, but regularly ventured to the area when the annual supply ship arrived to trade or to give medical attention.

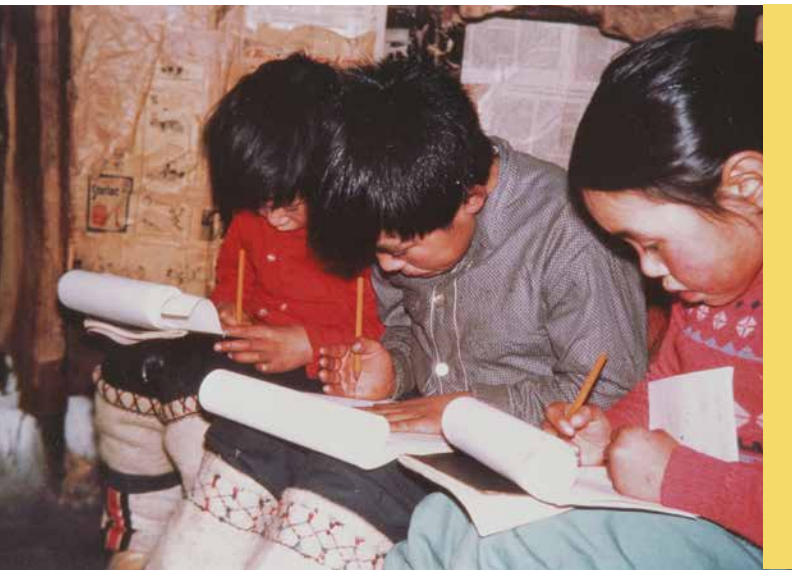
At this time, observers noted changes in the daily life and hunting patterns of Tununirusirmiut. In 1951, for example, an RCMP officer reported that a transition from traditional to contemporary clothing was occurring. In his report, the officer wrote:

> Year by year the natives become more poorly clad in store bought [sic] clothes which are quite inadequate to withstand the rigors of the far north climate and which do not begin to compare with native skin clothing, that is, caribou skins and seal skins. Rarely nowadays does one find the Eskimos using native made [sic] clothing of seal skin. Rubber boots are being substituted for seal skin footwear. The Eskimos sell their seal skins to the traders and in some cases make up seal skin clothing in substantial quantities and donate it to the missions or dispose of it to other white residents for some very small remuneration perhaps in the way of tobacco and cigarettes or some trinket.[28]

Some qallunaat, especially government officials, RCMP officers, and missionaries, believed that the transition from primarily being hunters of meat to primarily being trappers of fur was having a negative impact on the lives of Tununirusirmiut. They believed that the rise of the fur trade economy and the subsequent small returns it yielded for Inuit resulted in a dependency on family allowances and relief, which were insufficient to sustain families with housing, fuel, and food.

RCMP Inspector Larsen argued that the family allowances should be distributed differently to reduce dependence. As he saw it, while many Tununirusirmiut still resided in ilagiit nunagivaktangit, they were increasingly dependent on family allowances. In 1952, Larsen wrote to the RCMP Commissioner explaining that Tununirusirmiut hunting patterns were being disrupted by their need to regularly come to the settlement. "This takes the Eskimos away from their hunting grounds, causing them to spend much time travelling to and from trading posts and police detachments, thus neglecting their hunting and trapping."[29] The more that hunting patterns were disrupted, the more reliant Tununirusirmiut became on family allowances. Larsen argued that the hunting and travel patterns of Tununirusirmiut were being unduly restricted by the need to return to specific areas on a frequent basis to collect these allowances.

Tununirusirmiut unload the HMS Nascopie anchored off-shore at Arctic Bay, [1930s].
Credit: *Canada. Indian and Northern Affairs / Library and Archives Canada / PA-203632.*



Nunavummiut students take lessons at their home near Arctic Bay, [1969].
Credit: *NWT Archives, Northwest Territories: Department of Education Fonds, G-1979-023: 1389.*

Traditionally, Tununirusirmiut were familiar with making long journeys to trading posts while effectively using large resource areas. The accessibility provided by the establishment of the trading post at Arctic Bay, however, certainly made it easier to receive and spend family allowances. While the RCMP saw the trips to Arctic Bay as being problematic because of the travel time and energy required, the Tununirusirmiut saw the proximity of the settlement as a benefit to them. The HBC also saw it as beneficial, as long as they kept working traplines and buying goods. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1950s, Arctic Bay remained mainly a qallunaat enclave, with only a small collection of Tununirusirmiut families living in the immediate area. The RCMP and HBC employed Inuit men at varying periods of time, and it was their families that made up the Inuit population of the settlement. However, even those families came and went.[30] In the summer of 1958, 174 Tununirusirmiut lived in seven ilagiit nunagivaktangit situated throughout Admiralty Inlet.[31] Over the following decades, Arctic Bay slowly absorbed these populations, as Tununirusirmiut that traded there were more and more inclined to move to the settlement.[32]

Nunalinnguqti-tauliqtilluta (1958–1975)

The term "Nunalinnguqtitauliqtilluta" means "the time when we were actively (by outside force) formed into communities." Nunalinnguqtitauliqtilluta conforms to the period when the population the Qikiqtani Region was overwhelmingly concentrated in 13 communities where people worked with little or no continuous time living on the land.

AGENDAS AND PROMISES

After the Second World War, the Canadian federal government developed a newfound interest in what it termed the "welfare" of Inuit. The first systematic attempt to update demographic records for Inuit in the area occurred in 1946–7.[33] Various programs were executed throughout the latter half of the twentieth century that allowed the government to exercise greater control over activities in the north, while also providing services that were considered essential for all Canadians. The most significant and far-reaching programs, in order of importance, were in the fields of education, housing, and health care. The dramatic impact of these programs on enticing people into the settlement can be seen in statistics concerning the number of people living in Arctic Bay and those coming to trade. In 1961, 183 Tununirusirmiut were associated with Arctic Bay. Of these, only 44 (24%) were living in the settlement; the rest (76%) were only coming to trade. In 1967, these figures had completely reversed so that three-quarters of Tununirusirmiut were living in the settlement.[34]

When it came to education, federal authorities believed they should offer training that would give Inuit access to more of the economic opportunities available to all Canadians.[35] Implicitly, schooling was also considered an efficient way to assimilate Inuit to the broader Canadian society. A federal day school was established in 1958 in Arctic Bay. The teacher, appointed through the government, was also assigned the responsibility of distributing social assistance, a service that had previously been delegated to the HBC.[36] In 1962, a new school was constructed. At the same time, qallunaat progressively encouraged Tununirusirmiut to send their children to school. By 1966, there was a 40% increase in the number of children attending school.[37] In response, between 1963 and 1967, the government built another, larger school, three staff houses, a fourteen-bed hostel, and warehouses.[38] By 1968, RCMP reported that there were two full-time teachers in the school and one Inuk classroom assistant.

The first housing programs were directed at improving the housing conditions of Inuit living in ilagiit nunagivaktangit. These permanent, year-round shelters were ill-suited to the north and often had the effect of increasing infectious diseases.[39] Four single-room houses for Arctic Bay arrived in 1963, and between 1966 and 1967, eighteen three-bedroom houses were erected.[40] However, by this point, the more permanent population at the settlement had reached 159, which meant that many people were living in tents or crowding into the houses of relatives.[41]

The availability of houses rarely matched the need. In an interview, Koonoo Muckpaloo told Rhoda Innuksuk and Susan Cowen, "I know one family of five in Arctic Bay living in a one-room house … There are a lot of families who don't have enough room."[42] In addition, there were many issues with the quality of the houses and unexpected increases in rent. Ikey Kugutikakjuk discussed his experience with the QTC:

> We had been told prior to moving to [Arctic Bay] that we would have housing and pay $5.00 per month for it, that the rent would be very low. When we moved here in fact, the rent was that cheap and it felt as if it would stay that way when they were just starting to have housing. The rent was affordable at first but we started to realize afterwards that it was getting higher all the time.[43]

Many Tununirusirmiut remember being promised low rent as an incentive to move to the settlement, but the rents increased year after year.

Health services were also expanded in the 1950s and 1960s. Until then, the RCMP, the HBC, and annual patrols had offered a narrow range of health services. The 1950s were a difficult decade for the Inuit of the Arctic Bay area. RCMP annual reports spoke of near starvation (1957, 1958), deadly influenza and disease (1957, 1959), and qimmiit disease (1952, 1955, 1956). Influenza and polio outbreaks in the 1950s also led to quarantines of the settlement.[44] By the end of 1959, Indian and Northern Health Services (INHS) were using aircraft to examine and provide services to people in the Arctic Bay region. By 1962, this service had been replaced by an INHS field station located at the settlement. Unfortunately, the supplies for the station structure had been left on the beach for two years. When it was finally built, it was in such poor shape that it could not be occupied without extensive repairs, which were not completed until 1967.[45]

Only two remaining ilagiit nunagivaktangit — Koogalalek and Avartok— were identified in a 1967 Northern Baffin Island Area Economic Survey. Each ilagiit nunagivaktangat was about 20 kilometers away from Arctic Bay. Koogalalek benefited from access to ringed seal year-round. Avartok was a particularly well-equipped community consisting of seven families living year-round on the northwest tip of Strathcona Sound, with additional families from Arctic Bay joining the spring and summer hunts. The "camp boss" was described as being energetic and capable, with a capacity for hunting, maintaining motorboats, and supporting prospectors in the local mining exploration industry.[46]

For individuals living comfortably on the land with income from well-paid casual labour, a move to the settlement would have been risky. Only a handful of permanent jobs were available for Tununirusirmiut in Arctic Bay in 1967—two HBC clerks, two janitors, and a female classroom assistant. All other income came from hourly jobs as labourers and guides, as well as from social transfers, especially from family allowance and old age security. Only mining development offered a means of providing a reliable source of employment at Arctic Bay.

SHAPING COMMUNITY LIFE

Unemployment was only one of the challenges faced by the people of Arctic Bay during the 1960s. Another problem that arose concerned the handling of qimmiit in the settlement. Over the following years, individuals and families worked to adjust to the many changes in their lives.

Until snowmobiles were in daily use in Arctic Bay, qimmiit lived in the settlement. Between 1964 and 1965, a rabies epidemic decimated the qimmiit populations, resulting in a shortage by 1966.[47] At the same time, the increased number of qallunaat in Arctic Bay raised the likelihood of conflicts between qimmiit and people. This resulted in strict enforcement of the Ordinance Respecting Dogs. As part of the ordinance, qimmiit were required to be tied up at all times. Muckpaloo, an Arctic Bay Inuk, was hired as the first dogcatcher and instructed to shoot any loose qimmiit. In a 1975 interview, Muckpaloo recalled: "When I think about it now I feel sorry, because it certainly wasn't right, but that was how it was set up and that was how we did it."[48] Even when qimmiit were tied up, many qallunaat were still afraid of them and if they were considered vicious, they were shot.

Mine at Nanisivik, [1978].
Credit: *NWT Archives/Northwest Territories. Department of Public Works and Services fonds/G-1995-001: 5906.*

In an interview with a Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) researcher, Ikey Kugutikakjuk spoke about the day his father's qimmiit were killed:

> One late spring our dogs were tied up quite aways from the community. An RCMP member and the social worker came over to us. They told us that they were going to give them a needle. I told them, "I don't want you giving them a needle. My father is away. If I'm going to be the only one keeping them from getting agitated, I may find them hard to control as they are aggressive." At the time, they were tied up where the tank farm is now. But they insisted that they give them a needle … When we got near them, I asked that they keep a safe distance from the dogs while I went to fetch them and then finally asked them to come over … When the dogs finally calmed down enough, I took a hold of one and it was given a needle. When it started to yelp, all the dogs surrounded us so I had to keep both men from getting attacked … The dogs were used to me so they listened. I asked both men to go for now and come back after my father had arrived … We left the dogs, but then both men came back, each holding a rifle. They said that they wanted to shoot the dogs. At the time, my father had 16 or 17 dogs altogether … I can't remember how many dogs they had shot that day.[49]

The loss of qimmiit affected long-standing Tununirusirmiut hunting practices, so Tununirusirmiut did their best to comply with the ordinance, as described in this incident:

> When the dogs are tied and can't run around, they get very weak. Sometimes they freeze to death, sometimes starve. It's too cold here for that, so the dogs were in very bad shape … But the government had said that they should be tied down. Then they wanted a man to look after the dogs on a full-time basis and Muckpaloo was the first to have the job. He had to make sure every dog was tied; whenever one got loose he had to shoot it. Of course the men didn't like their dogs being shot because they were so useful, and the only means of travelling around to hunt in the winter. The men tried to take very good care of their dogs and make sure they didn't get loose, but the dogs grew weaker and weaker from lack of exercise until finally it was hopeless to attempt long journeys … Eventually we ran out of dogs and we started losing our qamutiks too, so that after we had lost both our dogs and our sleds, all the adults in this community were living like women. That's how it seemed. Those men, who were supposed to be men, no longer had any way to go hunting in the winter.[50]

The combination of qimmiit disease and the ordinance resulted in a decline in qimmiit at Arctic Bay, and many Tununirusirmiut turned to newer technology such as the snowmobile. By 1967, RCMP reported ten snowmobiles in the community.[51] However, snowmobiles could be unreliable and dangerous to run on the ice. Ikey Kugutikakjuk remembers how his family worried about him when he would use his snowmobile to go hunting:

> Dogs were very important and very useful because if I was to go out on a Ski-Doo alone and if I was away one week to one month, they would worry about me. If I was to take my dogs out for the same period, they wouldn't have worried about me because the dogs were able to go anywhere and the Ski-Doo could break![52]

Until local co-ops were established, snowmobile owners were also fully dependent on the HBC for fuel and replacement parts. The reliance on the HBC for supplies also meant that Tununirusirmiut were subject to the whims of the HBC manager. An incident in 1967 illustrates this: One of the community's best hunters wanted to obtain cash from the HBC post to purchase some items at Pond Inlet that were not available at Arctic Bay. He was refused despite having more than ample credit.[53]

In response to these issues, as well as to other challenges arising from community life, a Settlement Council was formed in 1967.[54] At first, six Tununirusirmiut served on the council, with assistance provided by the community's schoolteacher.[55] Over the following years, the council continued to develop.[56] Qamanirq, an Inuk elected as secretary in 1972, spoke to the efforts of the council. "They meet frequently and are looking after things very well. They are working hard and doing their jobs properly so that people can listen to them."[57] Following in the council's footsteps, a co-op, a health committee, a recreation committee, and a hunters' and trappers' association were established, demonstrating efforts on behalf of the Tununirusirmiut to adapt to the modern world. Unfortunately, Tununirusirmiut still found it difficult to have their voices heard by higher levels of government. During a 1975 interview, Kalluk talked about his time on the council and trying to get more housing in Arctic Bay:

> One of our jobs is to order the equipment and housing that we need in the community … But we find it hard to order anything now—we're not happy with how it's run. Maybe we're not strong enough yet, even with eight members … The bigger communities seem to be getting more things, while the smaller communities aren't getting enough.[58]

These difficulties only increased with the arrival of the Nanisivik mine and townsite at Strathcona Sound in the 1970s.

The mineral potential of the Arctic Bay area was known as early as 1910. In 1957, Texas Gulf Sulphur Company discovered the ore body that eventually became the location for the Nanisivik mine. Mineral Resources International (MRI) acquired the option, and by the early 1970s had put forward three development proposals. One option called for a bunkhouse operation only, meaning solely workers would be housed at the site with little settlement development. Another called for the relocation of the Arctic Bay settlement to Strathcona Sound. The third option proposed, with government assistance, the creation of a separate townsite. Government approval was provided for the third option and construction of the Nanisivik mine and townsite was underway by 1974.[59] A road, about 37 kilometres long, was built in 1976 connecting the mine with Arctic Bay and the airstrip at Nanisivik.[60]

Much of the rationale for the selection of the townsite option lay in expectations that the new mine and townsite would provide social and economic benefits to northern Baffin communities, and Arctic Bay in particular. In truth, development at Strathcona Sound made limited contributions to Arctic Bay. The community constantly struggled to get facilities and services as attention was focused on Nanisivik.[61] As Kalluk also pointed out in his 1975 interview, the primary administrator for Arctic Bay was also responsible for the Nanisivik townsite. This was problematic because he was located at Strathcona Sound, not Arctic Bay.

> The problem here is that there is a man working at Strathcona Sound ... He deals with us too. He comes to our Council meetings and he has told us that he would look after our needs too, and try to help us. He gets a lot of things, mainly for Strathcona Sound, but not enough for Arctic Bay. It's because there is one man looking after both and he works at Strathcona Sound.[62]

Kalluk went on to explain that Strathcona Sound and Nanisivik did not have their own Settlement Councils, but rather the Arctic Bay Council represented both sites. Kalluk hoped that Arctic Bay would receive hamlet status before Strathcona Sound so that it would give them more control. Arctic Bay became a hamlet in 1976 for this purpose.[63] Unfortunately, the residents of Arctic Bay never felt they were involved enough in the decision-making processes and continued to work towards increased engagement between the two communities. In a 2006 study looking at the socio-economic impacts of the mine, the authors quote an unnamed Inuk:

> "I just wish that they consulted with the community and the elders especially during the operation of the mine. Things I think would have gone a lot better if they worked closely together with the elders and the community."[64]

While the mine provided little to the development of Arctic Bay, it had a tremendous impact on the community's economy. Exploration activities between 1958 and 1970 provided sporadic wage employment, but Tununirusirmiut incomes prior to 1974 were primarily made up of trade-based activities. With the construction and subsequent operation of Nanisivik mine, many residents of Arctic Bay found full-time or temporary employment. Many Inuit from surrounding communities, including Pond Inlet, Igloolik, Sanirajak, Resolute, Clyde River, Qikiqtarjuaq, Pangnirtung, and Grise Fiord also came to the area for work.[65] At the same time, the mine and the people it brought into the area provided a substantial market for local carvers.

Despite these new opportunities, many Inuit struggled with the conflict of earning money to support their families and having time to hunt and provide meat for their families.[66] Because of this, Nanisivik was only partially successful in maintaining the promised 60% Inuit employment rate. Despite offering on-the-job training, the mine often found that there was not enough interest in mine employment among Inuit to fill the available positions.[67] Reports vary with regard to Inuit perceptions of the Nanisivik mine's hiring processes. While some Inuit report having no trouble finding employment when desired, others argued that the mine was selective and did not fulfill their promise of ensuring a 60% Inuit workforce.

Nevertheless, the income afforded by the mine changed the economy of Arctic Bay. The total personal income for the community reached as high as $1 million annually during the mine's years of construction and operation.[68] More money meant higher standards of living and Tununirusirmiut could buy newer equipment and supplies for hunting. This radically changed hunting patterns, as new technologies meant more efficient harvesting practices.[69] By the mid-1970s, hunters were travelling to Agu Bay by snowmobile to mass hunt and fish. They would take tens of thousands of pounds of meat for the community, with the fish being brought back to Arctic Bay by snowmobile and the caribou meat being flown back by a DC-3 plane chartered out of Resolute.[70] New hunting techniques provided for the continuation of sharing networks in the community. This also meant that fewer hunters were needed, and by 1977, the *Canada North Almanac* reported that hunting was no longer the main economic base of the community.

The impacts of the Nanisivik mine on the Arctic Bay community were far-ranging and extended well past 1975 to the closure of the mine in 2002 and even to today.[71] Social impacts, such as the lax alcohol policy at Nanisivik, challenged family and marriage integrity. Many Arctic Bay residents have since suggested that more Inuit could have worked at the mine, and for longer terms, had alcohol not been so readily available[72]. The road that linked Arctic Bay to the Nanisivik mine made it easier for people to obtain alcohol. Nanisivik residents were also able to order cheaper alcohol because of the discounts on shipping costs provided to employees. On the more positive side, Arctic Bay residents had access to some recreational facilities, such as the restaurant and pool at Nanisivik, and were able to attain various employment-related skills through the mine. The Allurut School at the mine townsite was also known for the quality of education provided. The closure of the Nanisivik mine and the townsite at Strathcona Sound raised many concerns in Arctic Bay, but as a former worker from the Nanisivik mine explained in 2002, "When the mine shuts, it will be hard for the first couple of years. As if we've lost someone important. But people will get over it. It will become a memory."[73]

Conclusion

Arctic Bay had, historically, been a sparsely populated region. The people of the region, the Tununirusirmiut, were culturally associated with the Inuit of Pond Inlet and Igloolik. Prior to the 1930s, Tununirusirmiut had very little contact with qallunaat. This changed with the arrival of the HBC in 1936. At the same time, the region's population was supplemented by the relocation of several Inuit families to the area. The relocations were approved by government but undertaken by the HBC, were designed to help further develop the fur trade economy. The Arctic Bay post provided a closer, more accessible avenue for trade, and over time Tununirusirmiut migrated towards Arctic Bay. Government modernization programs during the 1950s and 1960s resulted in more and more Tununirusirmiut moving to the settlement. By the end of the 1960s, there were only two ilagiit nunagivaktangit remaining in the area. Arctic Bay had gradually transformed from a qallunaat enclave to an Inuit community. As Kuppaq pointed out:

> People began moving here when they built the Bay post, and the first to come were … working for the Bay. At the time, they were the only ones who were living here permanently; nobody else really did until they started building the houses … Almost all the families now living in Arctic Bay lived quite close to this area.[74]

The construction and operation of the Nanisivik mine and townsite influenced Arctic Bay's development, and drastically influenced the community's economy. In 1976, Arctic Bay received hamlet status. Today Arctic Bay is a vibrant Nunavut hamlet, known for its whalebone and soapstone carvings as well as for an annual dog-sledding race that draws the best teams from all over the Qikiqtani Region.

ENDNOTES

1 The distance figure for Arctic Bay to Nanisivik is based on a straight-line measurement using the National Resources Canada online maps. For Population statistics, see Statistics Canada, 2012, Iqaluit, Nunavut (Code 6204003) and Nunavut (Code 62) (table). Online at www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E (accessed March 28, 2012). No Aboriginal/Non-aboriginal identity population data available for 2011.

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Foreword (2013)

As President of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, I am pleased to present the long-awaited set of reports of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission.

The *Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Community Histories 1950–1975* and *Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Thematic Reports and Special Studies* represent the Inuit experience during this colonial period, as told by Inuit. These reports offer a deeper understanding of the motivations driving government decisions and the effects of those decisions on the lives of Inuit, effects which are still felt today.

This period of recent history is very much alive to Qikiqtaalungmiut, and through testifying at the Commission, Inuit spoke of our experience of that time. These reports and supporting documents are for us. This work builds upon the oral history and foundation Inuit come from as told by Inuit, for Inuit, to Inuit.

On a personal level this is for the grandmother I never knew, because she died in a sanatorium in Hamilton; this is for my grandchildren, so that they can understand what our family has experienced; and it is also for the young people of Canada, so that they will also understand our story.

As it is in my family, so it is with many others in our region.

The Qikiqtani Truth Commission is a legacy project for the people of our region and QIA is proud to have been the steward of this work.

Aingai,

E7-1865

J. Okalik Eegeesiak, President, Qikiqtani Inuit Association

Introduction to the Work of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission

This work began with the breaking of a long silence. In the 1990s, Inuit made great strides in taking charge of their own affairs through the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the creation of Nunavut. They were then ready to examine the past, including the harm done during the period of greatest change, from 1950 to 1975. They wanted to understand more about their own lives and those lived by their parents, grandparents, and siblings in an era that was profoundly marked by game laws, residential schools, medical evacuations, substantial population movements, and broken promises about housing and jobs. One especially sensitive source of anguish and disturbing memories was the government's campaign to eliminate qimmiit (Inuit sled dogs) from the settlements. Qimmiit were often shot without warning by the RCMP and others, leaving many people without any means of winter transportation. In a culture where qimmiit were vital to hunting and travel, and valued as companions, this campaign struck very close to the well-being of every Inuit family. The history is still a painful wound for many Inuit in the Qikiqtani Region.

For a long time, many Inuit grieved in silence. Others spoke out in anger, aware that their experiences seemed to follow a pattern that was hard to decipher, but was important for understanding the problems in communities today. These feelings led the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) to interview Elders in 2004 about various issues related to moving into settlements. In 2007, the QIA created the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), a forum where Inuit could speak openly about difficult events in the decades after the Second World War and understand more about how communities took shape and the true costs of the changes. The QTC's investigation had two closely related activities. The first was to gather testimonies about events between 1950 and 1975 from Inuit who had lived through this difficult period, as well as from their children who continue to remember the suffering of their parents and other relatives. Commissioner Igloliorte and QTC staff travelled to all thirteen communities in the Qikiqtani Region between January 2008 and May 2009, and invited all interested residents to share their memories and feelings about how their lives had changed. They also held hearings for the Inuit community in Ottawa, and paid return visits to all communities in early 2010 to report on findings and ask for comments on proposed recommendations. Including interviews that the QIA had already conducted in 2004, the QTC had testimonies from approximately 350 individuals. Hearings were conducted with more flexibility than normal legal proceedings, but to emphasize the seriousness of the task, Commissioner Igloliorte asked all witnesses to affirm that they would tell the truth to the best of their knowledge. He also respected the decision made by a few individuals to keep their experiences private.

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

The Evidence

THE WITNESSES

The QTC is indebted to the many men and women who attended meetings and opened their homes to give their testimonies. People welcomed the commission warmly into their communities and spoke freely and honestly about their lives. Without their testimonies, the commission would not have been able to fully appreciate what happened to Inuit during this period of immense transition. They also provided very thoughtful and constructive feedback and suggestions regarding the kind of recommendations that would promote reconciliation between Inuit and government. A full list of individuals is included in the List of Witnesses on the QTC website.

ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

The QTC's research team collected and reviewed accessible archival and secondary sources for the period in focus, 1950 to 1975. This included examinations of relevant records from Library and Archives Canada, as well as the Archives of the Northwest Territories, the RCMP, the Hudson's Bay Company, and Anglican and Roman Catholic bodies. Thousands of documents were digitized for the QTC's research database.

MAPS

Maps provide important details about how Inuit lived and used the territories surrounding their present-day communities. These maps reject a common idea in the south that the Arctic is "empty." In addition to showing the sites of ilagiit nunagivaktangit, details on twentieth-century maps include place names indicating how Inuit knew and utilized the land, along with their travel routes, and the best places for hunting. This kind of information began to be set down on paper before 1840. However, some of the most thorough maps are those created by Inuit for the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project (1976) and the Nunavut Atlas (1992).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (2024 EDITION)

The reports drafted in 2010 for the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) were prepared under the direction of James Igloliorte, Commissioner, and Madeleine Redfern, Executive Director, QTC. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) project managers in 2013 were Bethany Scott, Navarana Beveridge, and Sandra Kownak.

The primary authors of most reports were Julie Harris, Contentworks Inc. and Philip P. Goldring, Ph.D. Writing and research support was provided by Joan Bard Miller, Francis Levésque, Ryan Shackleton, Frank J. Tester, Anna Gilmer, Alice Glaze, Teresa Iacobelli, Natascha Morrison, Linda Radford, Dr. Yvonne Boyer, and Brian Cameron.

The translation team for the reports produced in 2013 included Jay Arnakak, Mali Curley, Julia Demcheson, Veronica Dewar, Elisapee Ikkidluak, Emily Illnik, David Joanasie, Leonie Kappi, Pujjuut Kusugak, Nina Tootoo, and Blandina Tulugarjuk. Additional translation for the 2024 editions was provided by Ruth Kadlutsiak.

The work of the QTC would not have been possible without the financial support of the following organizations: Qikiqtani Inuit Association; Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated; Makivik Corporation; Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation; First Air; Air Inuit; Unaalik Aviation; Kenn Borek Air Ltd.

The 2024 editions of the QTC reports were prepared by Julie Harris, Augatnaaq Eccles, Zarina Laalo and Anne Brazeau of Contentworks Inc. under the direction of Inukshuk Aksalnik, Jennifer Ipirq, and Simon Cuerrier of QIA.

For many years, Inuit Elders in the Qikiqtani (Baffin) Region have been haunted by a deep sense of loss as they remember how their lives changed in the decades after 1950. The thematic reports and special studies in this collection explore themes that emerged during the work of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission. What started as an inquiry into the slaughter of sled dogs quickly grew to include other experiences of profound colonial change.

Commissioner James Igloliorte's Final Report, titled *Achieving Saimaqatigiingniq*, and 22 companion thematic and historical reports published by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association in Inuktitut and English weave together evidence from testimonies and documents collected during the Qikiqtani Truth Commission about the consequential 1950–1975 period.

QTC Report Collection

Aaniajurliriniq: Health Care in the Qikiqtani Region, 1950–1975

Achieving Saimaqatiqiingniq: Final Report of the Commissioner of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission

Analysis of the RCMP Sled Dog Report

Igluliriniq: Housing in the Qikiqtani Region, 1950–1975

Illinniarniq: Schooling in the Qikiqtani Region, 1950–1975

Nuutauniq: Moves in Inuit Life in the Qikiqtani Region to 1975

Paliisikkut: Policing in the Qikiqtani Region, 1950–1975

Pivalliajuliriniq: Economic Development in the Qikiqtani Region, 1950–1975

Qimmiliriniq: Inuit Sled Dogs in the Qikiqtani Region, 1950–1975

The Official Mind of Canadian Colonialism

Arctic Bay (Ikpiarjuk) Community History, 1950–1975

Clyde River (Kangiqtugaapik) Community History, 1950–1975

Grise Fiord (Ausuittuq) Community History, 1950–1975

Igloolik Community History, 1950–1975

Iqaluit Community History, 1950–1975

Kimmirut Community History, 1950–1975

Kinngait Community History, 1950–1975

Pangnirtung Community History, 1950–1975

Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik) Community History, 1950–1975

Qikiqtarjuaq Community History, 1950–1975

Resolute Community History, 1950–1975

Sanikiluaq Community History, 1950–1975

Sanirajak Community History, 1950–1975