

Kinngait

Qikiqtani Truth Commission
Community Histories 1950–1975

Published by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association

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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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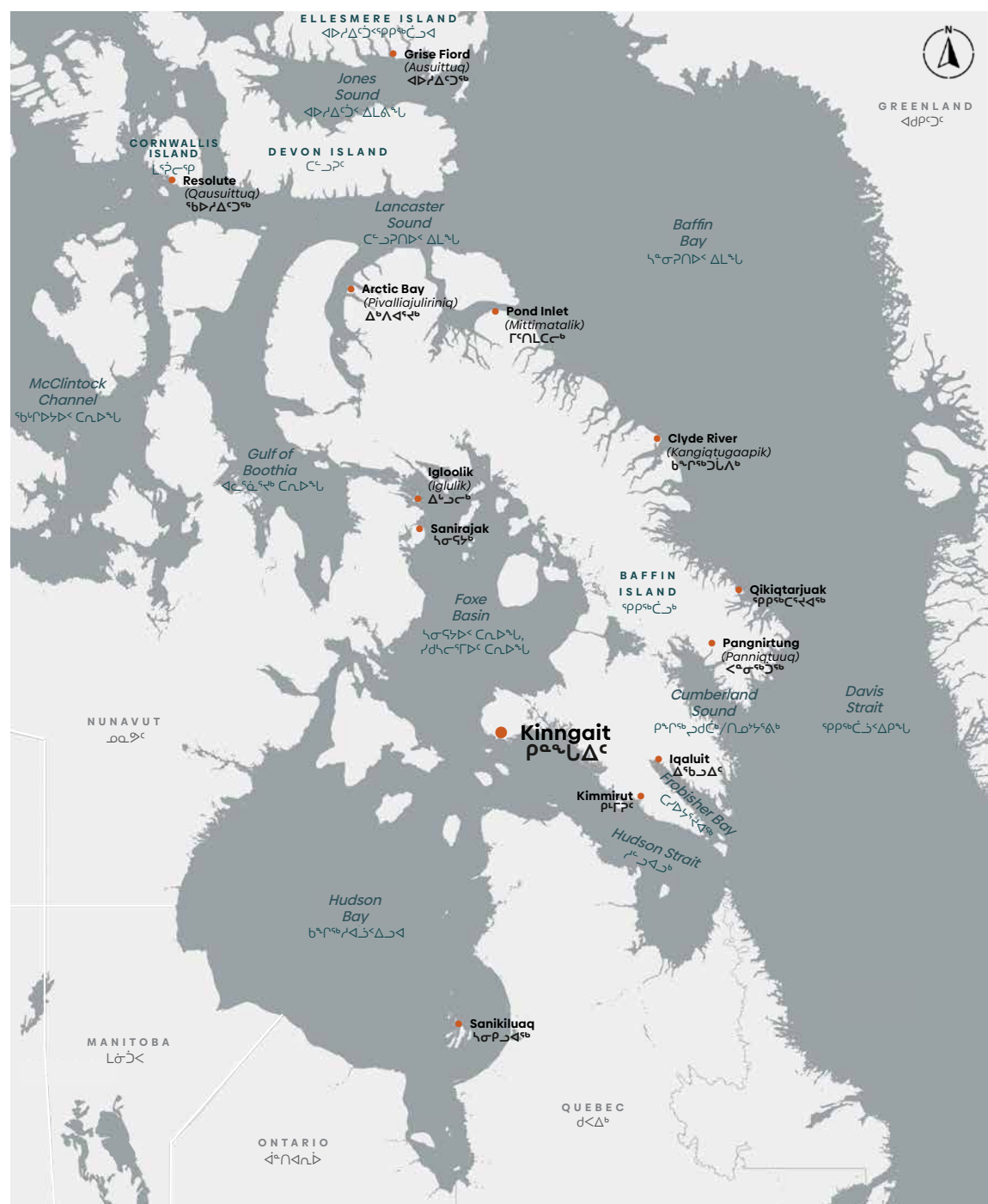
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Introducing Kinngait

Kinngaitⁱ (formerly Cape Dorset) is known to have been inhabited for at least two thousand years, originally by Tuniit or Dorset people, and then by Inuit whose hunting patterns were guided by game and environmental conditions. Generally, mainland ilagiit nunagivaktangitⁱ in the area were occupied in winter; in summer, they were moved to offshore islands. Inuit named the area Kinngait, which describes the high, undulating hills surrounding the community's small, protected harbour.² People of the region call themselves Kinngarmiut. The place has also been known as Sikusilaq, and the people as Sikusilarmiut, a reference to the place of open water in winter.

Before 1900, contacts between Kinngarmiut and non-Inuit were infrequent. Trading and whaling vessels rarely came closer to Kinngait than the islands off Kimmirut. Still, trade was rewarding for those Kinngarmiut who made the journey, which was up to 300 kilometres for some families. After the whaling companies declined, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) established a trading post in 1913 on Dorset Island, one of a cluster of small islands connected at low tide to Baffin Island's Foxe Peninsula.

Initially, only a few Inuit families came to Kinngait to live year-round and work for the trading post, but throughout the period (1950–1975) covered by the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), Kinngarmiut began abandoning the ilagiit nunagivaktangit that surrounded Kinngait and establishing themselves in what had been a qallunaat enclave at the site of the present community. This movement towards centralization was caused in large part by the consolidation of government services in the settlement.ⁱⁱ

It was during this period that a nursing station was opened, schools and schooling programs for children and adults were established, and houses were built. Another factor that encouraged the centralization of Inuit in Kinngait was the establishment of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Limited. The co-operative had a profound effect on the number of people choosing to move to the community, on artistic production, and on the development of Inuit-owned businesses.

Centralization was not without its consequences. People began to adapt to the stern realities of an unstable wage economy. During the 1960s, the number of hunters decreased, and those who remained had to deal with game regulations about which they were never consulted.

i This report uses current geographical place names unless another name is used in quotation or citation.

ii This report uses the term “government” to include all the bodies that existed under Canadian federal legislation to serve and control people, mostly Inuit, in the Qikiqtani Region.

During the same period, the number of Kinngarmut working for wages increased. However, wage employment was often seasonal and was accessible only to a few. Arts and crafts also provided a source of income for some, but many had to rely on government assistance. The consolidation of government services in the settlement also brought in qallunaat and, with them, alcohol. The RCMP had to establish a new detachment in the settlement to deal with an increase in criminal infractions. Centralization also led to a decrease in the qimmiitⁱⁱⁱ population caused by the prevalence of disease, the strict control of loose qimmiit exercised by local authorities, and the arrival of the snowmobile and more motorboats in the mid-1960s.

The population, almost entirely centralized in the hamlet of Kinngait, has continued to grow steadily, reaching 1,363 in 2011. Kinngait is currently known as one of the most important cultural centres in Canada. It has a worldwide reputation for art production and has been home to some of Canada's most important artists, including Nuna Parr, Pudlo Pudlat, and Kenojuak Ashevak. It is also recognized for successful tourism initiatives. Tourists come to Kinngait on cruise ships or by air to see artworks and artists, or to visit snow geese nesting grounds protected at the Dewey Soper and Bowman Bay bird sanctuaries, about 275 kilometres northeast of the community. Kinngait is also situated near some of the finest Thule culture archaeological sites in the Arctic regions of Canada. Mallikjuaq Territorial Park, with its numerous cultural features, is located across the inlet from the hamlet and is accessible by boat, or on foot during low tide.

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 Inuktitut 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

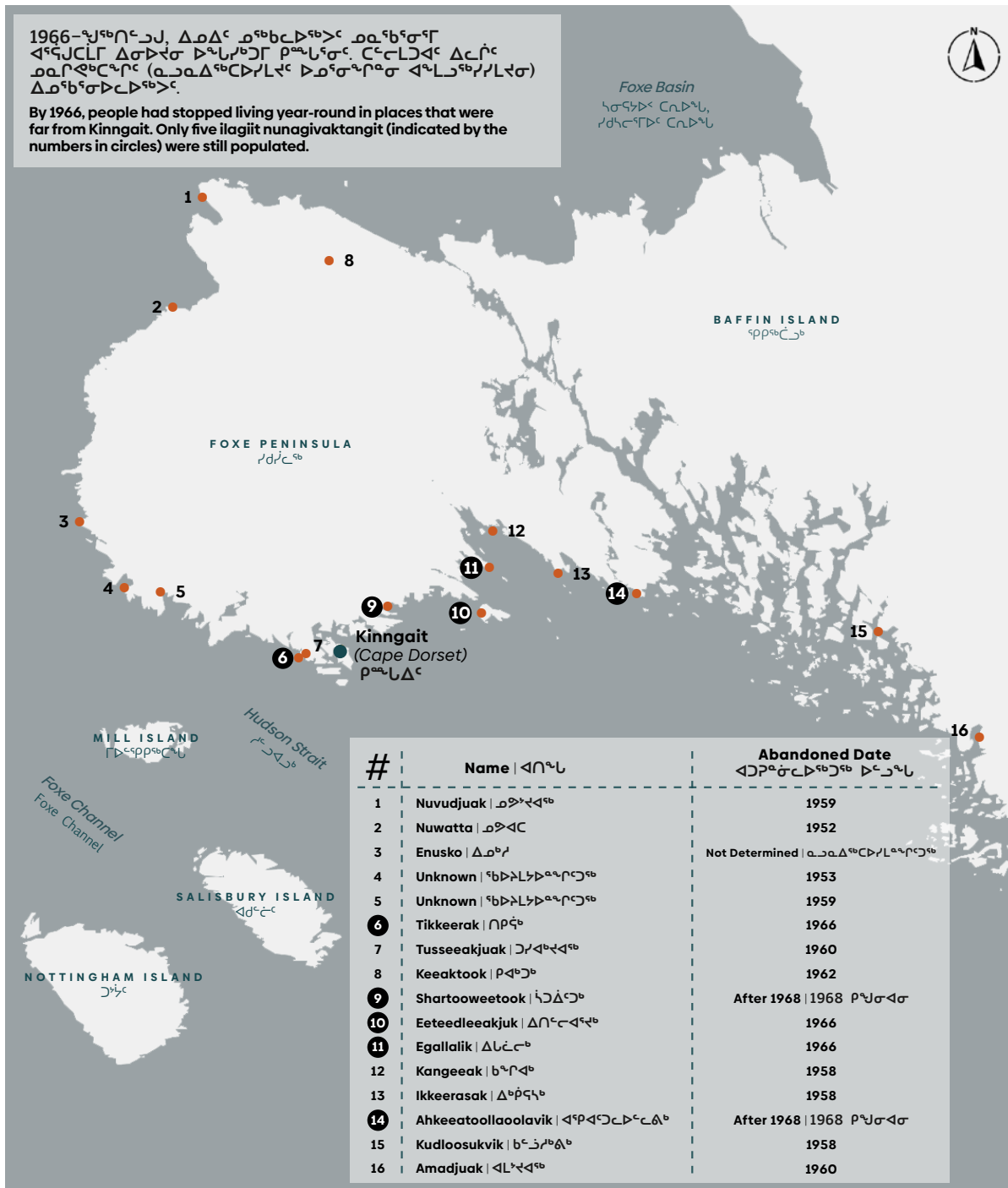
Kinngait is favourably situated on Hudson Strait. Extensive land-fast ice forms along the coast in winter, and sea mammals can be hunted in the area from boats almost all year. The hamlet is located on the north side of Dorset Island facing Mallik Island across Cape Dorset Harbour. At low tide, the two islands are joined by a barrier beach located to the west of the settlement.

The south coast of Foxe Peninsula is characterized by high, rugged hills, known as the Kinngait Range, which reaches their highest elevation (260 metres) on Dorset and Mallik Islands. Most hills have been rounded by glacial action.³

The area traditionally used by Kinngarmut hunters extended from the Hantzsch River in the north, inland to Nettilling Lake then south past Amadjuak Lake to Hudson Strait around Markham Bay. The cluster of islands lying westward from Amadjuak Bay to Cape Dorset provides the most important and diversified hunting grounds, while to the southwest, Mill and Salisbury Islands have important populations of walrus. Kinngarmut hunted whales during the fall as the pods moved southeast along the Baffin coast. Geese and ducks were also hunted throughout the islands. Ringed and bearded seals were usually abundant throughout the area and traditionally provided a staple to the people's existence throughout the year. During the spring and summer, seals were available along areas of fast ice and tidal cracks. Inuit harvested Arctic char throughout the region's many inland lakes, rivers, and coastal inlets, primarily in the fall and winter. Polar bears were hunted on the coast and interior mainland between Kinngait and Cape Dorchester.

iii Qimmiit means *Inuit sled dogs* (singular version of the Inuktitut word is qimmiq)..

**Δελτίο Δοκιμωτικής Ρωγμής Δομοληψίας, 1950-Γ 1970-Γ |
Ilagiit Nunagivaktangit in the Kinngait Area, 1950-1970**



⁶ Source: C.M. Higgins. The Southeast Coast of Baffin Island, an area economic survey. Ottawa, Industrial Division, Dept of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1968. [ᐃᑭᓂᒃᔪᓄᓇᐅᓴᕈᑦ : C.M. Higgins. The Southeast Coast of Baffin Island, an area economic survey. Ottawa, Industrial Division, Dept of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1968.

Caribou hunting occurred over a vast expanse of inland territory except the western and northern regions of the Foxe Peninsula. The eastern boundary was located at Markham Bay north to Nettilling Lake. Caribou hunting shifted annually within this region depending on herd sizes and animal migrations. As Nuna Parr told the QTC, hunting trips could be lengthy. “[Hunters] would be away for a month if they were out caribou hunting. We would expect them to arrive anytime . . . It used to last a whole month.”⁴ During this period, caribou hunting locations were also largely in the same areas as inland fox traplines.⁵

Up until the early 1950s, the local diet was largely seal meat, supplemented by caribou, fish, wildfowl, and by a few imported foods from the trading post. Qimmiit were usually fed seal and walrus. In the early 1950s, the settlement of Kinngait provided services to approximately five hundred persons.



View of Cape Dorset, [1960].

Credit: J. Connor and M. McConnell / Library and Archives Canada / e006609567.

Most lived in sixteen ilagiit nunagivaktangit stretched along 500 kilometres of coast east and west of Kinngait. Their locations shifted occasionally, but they were concentrated on the coast and on inshore islands.

Kinngarmiut continued the seasonal annual rounds that were a longstanding features of pre-contact life in the 1950s. The majority of ilagiit nunagivaktangit were located on the mainland during the winter and then moved to the offshore islands or close to shorelines to take advantage of marine mammal resources. The area was the most intensively trapped area in southern and eastern Baffin Island. Traplines extended far into the interior and out on to the ice floe.

EARLY CONTACTS

Until the early twentieth century, contacts between Kinngarmiut and qallunaat were limited. The first documented European visit to western Hudson Strait was Captain Henry Hudson's Northwest Passage search in 1610–11. Since Hudson followed the southern coast of the strait, contact with Kinngarmiut is unlikely. The first encounter likely took place during Captain Luke Foxe's 1631 voyage when he named the area Cape Dorset for the fourth earl of Dorset, an English courtier, diplomat, and promoter of colonization.

During the eighteenth century, HBC ships regularly sailed the strait to supply trading posts in Hudson Bay and James Bay.⁶ The ships' captains were equipped with trade goods, mainly tools and hunting implements, to exchange with Inuit along the southern coast of Baffin Island. Some of these goods probably reached Kinngait by trade among Inuit groups. In 1860, American whalers began entering Hudson Strait when sailing to Roes Welcome Sound, west of Southampton Island. Whalers sometimes fished in the waters of the strait but very few wintered there.⁷ Nevertheless, by 1900, Scottish whalers were visiting the coast every year near present-day Kimmirut, and Inuit from all along the south Baffin coast met them there to trade. Before the HBC opened posts at Kimmirut in 1911 and Kinngait in 1913, Kinngarmiut sometimes travelled all the way to the HBC at Kuujjuaq,

now part of northern Quebec, through the Tujjat Islands (Mills, Salisbury, and Nottingham islands). Sometimes whole families chose to stay away for years. As Kinngarmiut became accustomed to contact with Europeans and their trade goods, the stage was set for a permanent qallunaat presence at Kinngait.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF LIFE

The establishment of the HBC in Kimmirut in 1911 and Kinngait in 1913 changed the hunting, settlement, and mobility patterns of Kinngarmiut. Contacts between Kinngarmiut and qallunaat became more frequent, though Inuit continued to live dispersed across the region. Missionaries followed the HBC.⁸ In 1939, a Catholic mission opened, followed by a permanent Anglican mission in 1961. Scientists also came into the area. In 1925, a visiting anthropologist, Diamond Jenness, was the first to recognize the tiny artefacts of the Tuniit as evidence of a very early population, which he called the Dorset culture in recognition of the place. Naturalist J. Dewey Soper arrived in 1929 searching for the nesting grounds of the blue goose, which he located with the help of a large party of Kinngarmiut—Kavivau, Ashuna, Shappa, Powlusik, Nunaswetuk, Eliak, and Putugak. Although RCMP members visited regularly, it did not establish a detachment here before 1950.

The Kinngait trading post was established in association with the post at Kimmirut. There was a third post midway between the two at Amadjuak, from 1921 to 1933. Game was plentiful and so were foxes. Kinngait was at first supplied from Kimmirut by the schooner *Nanook*. Inuit in the area recall building an inuksuk at the inlet to Cape Dorset to help mark the passage for boats that hauled timber and supplies for the HBC post.⁹ In the 1930s, the HBC received permission from the federal administration to relocate people from Kinngait to new trading posts further north.¹⁰ In 1934, the HBC supply vessel ship *RMS Nascope* took twenty-two people from Kinngait to Dundas Harbour on Devon Island, but their venture failed.¹¹ Most of them were relocated to Arctic Bay in northern Baffin Island two years later, and some went on from there to a new post—Fort Ross, on Somerset Island—in 1937. In 1947, Fort Ross also closed, and people moved further south to Spence Bay, now Taloyoak.¹²

Competition came briefly to Kinngait when an ex-HBC trader founded the Baffin Trading Company and built a post at Kinngait in 1939. This short-lived operation closed after the Second World War. Because most Kinngarmiut by this time were Christians, visits from the ilagiit nunagivaktangit to the settlement to celebrate Christmas and Easter were common. Fox furs were also traded at these times.

In the 1930s and 1940s, non-traditional health care was delivered by trading posts and once a year by medical personnel from the Eastern Arctic Patrol (EAP). Kinngait suffered through a major typhoid epidemic in 1945 that was brought under control through a combination of inoculations and improved procedures for limiting infections in the community. In 1947, the *Nascope* ran aground near Kinngait. Inuit in the area salvaged as much as possible, including wood that they used to construct homes.¹³



Father Trinell and a group of Inuit children standing in front of the Roman Catholic Mission at Cape Dorset, [1951].

Credit: Douglas Wilkinson / Office nationale du film du Canada / Bibliothèque et Archives Canada / PA-146509.

Sangussaqtauliqtilluta (1950–1965)

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.

During the 1950s, Kinngarmiut families began a dramatic shift as families relocated to Kinngait. By 1965, they had abandoned most of the ilagiit nunagivaktangit, starting with the ones furthest from the trading post and mission. In 1950, most families still lived in 16 ilagiit nunagivaktangit that stretched along 500 kilometres of coast east and west of Kinngait. The number was reduced to two in 1968.

The fate of Kinngait’s Inuit families was closely tied to individual agents of government, church, and trade who tried to balance the objectives of their respective organizations with what they believed to be the wellbeing of Inuit. Following the introduction of family allowance payments in 1946, the federal government sought more uniformity in communications and control over

Inuit activities. RCMP officers reported regularly to superiors in Ottawa and to other central government agencies, such as the Canadian Wildlife Service, that tracked changes. Government services and responses—game regulations, schools and school hostels, increased health care services in particular—were almost always decided without consultation with Arctic residents, whether qallunaat or Inuit, and were always based on southern administrative approaches.

Life in the region was also tied closely to environmental conditions. In May 1950, the RCMP reported food shortages throughout the area.¹⁴ There had been little fresh meat available for families since winter 1949 and food for qimmiit was fast disappearing. Conditions at the end of January were “very adverse” to seal hunting. In most of the ilagiit nunagivaktangit Inuit were eating food that had been cached for qimmiit. By the end of February, qimmiit were dying of starvation and “there were many instances of the largest dogs eating the more feeble ones.” These conditions continued through March. Inuit who relied on the HBC for rations complained of stomach pains.¹⁵ By April, RCMP reported that Inuit were in “semi starvation condition and a [parachute] drop of fresh meat and dog food [was] absolutely necessary.”¹⁶

In 1950, at the height of the food shortage, the federal government established a small nursing station in the abandoned Baffin Trading Company facilities. The nursing station proved useful to deal with various illnesses, especially the widespread influenza outbreaks that occurred after the annual visits of the *C. D. Howe*, a vessel that carried supplies and personnel across much of the Eastern Arctic. *C. D. Howe*’s visits were awaited with anxiety in part because they brought influenza, but also because Inuit were tested for tuberculosis onboard. Those infected were transported at very short notice to southern hospitals and sanatoria where they were treated for months and even years. Some people never returned, having died while away. Quppiurialuk Padluq told the QTC about his experience when his grandfather never returned from the south.



Kinngarmiut unloading cargo at Kinngait [1958]. As centralization intensified, reliance on imported provisions increased.

Credit: Charles Gimpel / Library and Archives Canada / e004922713.

I am not exactly sure, but he probably died from illnesses. I do not know which hospital he was at. Our family used to wonder how he died. They felt so much for him because he wasn't with his family when he passed away. I only know he is buried down there but not the exact location.¹⁷

The year 1950 also saw the arrival of the first school building in Kinngait. Classes began in September for three students. Instruction was suspended in 1952 until 1954 when a new welfare teacher, Margery Hinds, arrived after several years in northern Quebec. As a welfare teacher, Hinds was also responsible for administering the welfare and physical well-being of Inuit in the settlement in the absence of other government agencies. Hinds had a remarkable career as a teacher in the north, where she tried to find ways to teach students in their own homes. She visited ilagiit nunagivaktangit and distributed educational materials to eighty-two children. Her experiment in distance learning lasted only a few years and formal schooling soon became limited once again to children living in the settlement or coming there for long periods.

By 1957, the school at Kinngait had twenty-eight registered students and in 1962 claimed to have seventy-six in grades one to six.¹⁸ This growth was a direct consequence of government policies. Until the mid-1950s, the government expected Inuit to live off the land and did not force families to send their children to school. Then, the government reversed its policies and decided to involve Inuit in industrializing and modernizing the north. To do so, the government encouraged parents to send their children to the newly built school. Federal authorities believed they were doing young Inuit a great service by offering schooling and training that would give them access to the same economic opportunities as other Canadians. Implicitly, schooling was also considered an efficient way to assimilate Inuit to broader Canadian society. Quppirualuk Padluq

told the QTC that students were discouraged from speaking Inuktitut in school: "It was very scary to speak Inuktitut. We were punished if we spoke Inuktitut, unexpectedly. Our teacher always told us not to speak Inuktitut in class."¹⁹

Many families believed their children needed to be educated if they wanted to take advantage of the new northern economy and for this reason decided to send their children to school.²⁰ Quppirualuk Padluq recalled, "Back then, the qallunaat had more authority, and my parents had no choice but to say yes ... They were probably intimidated and probably too scared to say no."²¹ Many parents were reluctant to leave their children for many months at a time, however, and decided to follow their children to Kinngait. Thus, the opening of the first school building in the settlement played a significant role in the centralization process that brought Inuit to



Printmakers at work in the art centre, [1960]. Print making and stone carving were an economic boon to Cape Dorset, and the community came to be known as an artistic center.

Credit: Bibliothèque et Archives Canada/Fonds de l'Office national du film / e011177385.

Kinngait in the 1950s. The centralization process was accelerated by the belief held by many families that they would lose their family allowance payments—which, in the Qikiqtani Region rivalled the fur trade as a source of Inuit income—if they did not send their children to school.

In 1952, the RCMP reported an improvement in the conditions among Inuit, citing better cache systems, the introduction of handicrafts as a supplement to income, the receipt of relief payments, and fewer qimmiit.²² However, circumstances changed from year to year. A measles epidemic struck southern Baffin Island in the winter of 1952, killing almost twenty people in the Kinngait area alone.²³ In 1953, an influenza epidemic killed another twenty.²⁴ Famine conditions during the winter of 1956–7 resulted in the death of many qimmiit in the area. This event, coupled with fluctuating fur prices and increased economic opportunities in the settlement, encouraged further migrations from ilagiit nunagivaktangit to Kinngait despite the fact that administrators were not yet pressing people to move.²⁵

Among the best-known economic opportunities offered to Kinngarmiut in the 1950s was the production of carvings, and later, prints. The federal government became increasingly interested in promoting artistic production in the area after 1949, when James Houston visited the east coast of Hudson Bay as a representative of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild.²⁶ He and his wife, Alma Houston, travelled to the south Baffin coast during the summers of 1951 and 1952. They encouraged Inuit artists to produce works that could be purchased by the HBC posts for resale by the guild. Although some people warned him that a shortage of stone would reduce the impact of the venture, Houston was supported by other officials in the Department of Northern Affairs and went forward with the initiative.²⁷ In 1956, the Houston's returned to Kinngait, where James was employed as a Northern Service Officer. His residence was constructed during the late summer and fall of 1956, along with another new building that came to be known locally as sanaunguabik, "the place where things are made." The number of people employed to construct the buildings grew to such an extent that the welfare teacher thought that hunting was being ignored in the community.²⁸

Some of the first printmakers to work with Houston at the new craft shop were Kananginak Pootoogook, Eegyvdruk Pootoogook, Lukta Qiatsuq, and Iyola Kingwatsiak.²⁹ In December 1958, they had their first public showing and sale at the HBC store in Winnipeg. It was a sell-out success, and the craft shop received the go-ahead to continue work and start planning for the next "collection." Subsequent exhibits were also successes, and official openings for the Kinngait collections had far-reaching effects for Inuit art. By 1961, as part of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Limited, the print shop was then under the direction of Terry Ryan and had grown to employ more artists, including Pudlo Pudlat, Pitseolak Ashoona, Napachie Pootoogook, Kiakshuk, Nuna Parr, Joanasie Salomonie, Eegyadruk Ragee, Kenojuak Ashevak, and Lucy Quinnuayuak. In the following years, interest in the studio grew,



Kenojuak drawing inside her tent, [1960].

Credit: Rosemary Gilliat / National Film Board of Canada.
Photothèque / Library and Archives Canada / PA-146503.

and by 1967, two residences and a second studio were built, with more than one hundred people being employed there. In 1993, Kenojuak Ashevak wrote for the *Annual Graphics Collection* catalogue:

I will never forget when a bearded man called Saumik (James Houston) approached me to draw on a piece of paper. My heart started to pound like a heavy rock. I took the papers to my qamak and started marking the paper with assistance from my love, Johnniebo. When I first started to make a few lines, he smiled at me and said, "Inumn," which means "I love you." I just knew inside his heart that he almost cried knowing that I was trying my best to say something on a piece of paper that would bring food to the family. I guess I was thinking of the animals and beautiful flowers that covered our beautiful, untouched land.³⁰



Solomonie, watched by his daughter Annie, working on a model kayak for the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, [1951].

Credit: National Film Board of Canada. Photothèque / Library and Archives Canada.

Nunalinnguqti-tauliqtiluta (1965–1975)

The term “Nunalinnguqtitauliqtiluta” means “the time when we were actively (by outside force) formed into communities.” Nunalinnguqtitauliqtiluta 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

The intensity of the centralization process increased in the 1960s. In 1965, there were 155 individuals in five ilagiit nunagivaktangit. By the end of 1966, there were only 55 people living in three ilagiit nunagivaktangit according to RCMP reports. By the end of 1967, only 41 Inuit out of the area’s 505 were still living in ilagiit nunagivaktangit.³¹ In 1968, as few as 36 people lived in two ilagiit nunagivaktangit (Shartooweetook and Ahkeeatoollaoovik).

One of the noteworthy moves to Kinngait was the migration of a family group under Kupa (or Kopak) from Salluit, Nunavik. In 1965, after the death of his father Tayarak, Kupa chose to lead his relatives to a new home where economic conditions would be better. In September 1968, they arrived in Kinngait. The Tayarak group was initially settled in a segregated section of Kinngait, but soon relocated into the centre of the community.³² The centralization process did not have one single cause.³³ Kinngarmiut explained this to researchers for the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project in 1974–77. Their report focused on the growing attractions of the settlement, singling out the co-op in 1959, the Anglican Church in 1961, and the RCMP detachment in 1965. A combination of factors often led families to move to Kinngait. Many families moved in response to pressure exerted by teachers telling them their children had to go to school. Others moved to be near medical facilities (there was a succession of sicknesses), and others moved at the promise of jobs. Some people said they moved to be with

their families and others because they were lonely without their children. In many cases, there was something negative about the move, and in almost all cases, people stated that they would rather live out in the camps (1974). Ejetsiak Peter and his wife moved to the community around 1960 after the new co-operative opened, for employment. Once they arrived, they discovered how difficult it was to live in the settlement. “Everything was different when we moved. It was harder for everyone. Bylaws started to be enforced.”³⁴

Although Inuit moved into Kinngait for many reasons, the establishment of the West Baffin Co-operative over the 1959–61 period had a profound effect. Kananginaaq Pootoogook told the QTC that the co-operative made a big difference in his life. He first started working on various jobs with the government. He explains, “Then I started to help building the co-op in 1956–58 ... I used to make \$2 a day in 1957–58 and once the co-op was established I really started making money ... I gained so much knowledge from the co-op.”³⁵ Social transfers—family allowance, welfare assistance, and pensions—were also important sources of income for Inuit, but the most dramatic change in the 1960s could be seen in handicraft production and wages, a key to which was the co-operative.

The co-operative was originally created in early 1959 as the West Baffin Sports Fishing Co-operative. This tourism initiative was also designed for the promotion and operation of an “art, handicraft and/or cottage industry.” Financing for its creation came from the federal government’s Eskimo Loan Fund, as well as from revenues from the 1959 print collection. That inaugural collection was launched to critical acclaim and started an art boom that has lasted many years. This boom was in large part the work of Terry Ryan, who arrived as a temporary arts advisor for the co-operative in 1960 and stayed close to forty years in the community as its general manager. Ryan, an arts student who had already worked in Clyde River, put years of effort into marketing Dorset Fine Arts and encouraging artists to develop their talent.³⁶

In 1961, the co-operative was reincorporated as the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Limited. Its retail trade store, built in 1961, ended the HBC monopoly over consumer supplies to the community. In addition to strengthening the economic position of the community and options for its residents, the co-operative helped fund community infrastructure and became responsible for the delivery and distribution of fuel and other initiatives. The following table illustrates the changes in income sources at Kinngait during the critical 1964–6 period and the importance of arts and crafts to the community.

Community	Years	Hunting & Trapping	Handicrafts	Wage labour	Social Transfers	Total
Kinngait	1962–63	\$22,000	\$38,000	\$29,000	\$22,000	\$111,000
Kinngait	1966–67	\$38,000	\$158,000	\$153,000	\$43,000	\$392,000

Table 1: Source: For Cape Dorset, Higgins, *South Coast-Baffin Island*, 110.³⁷ The table does not include the value of country food. “Social transfers” includes family allowance and social assistance which Higgins reported as “unearned”.

Another factor that led many Inuit to Kinngait was the presence of an upgraded nursing station.³⁸ Staffed by a husband-and-wife team, the new station with four beds and a refrigerated storage area was built in 1960 to replace one established ten years earlier. The nursing station offered immunizations as well as treatment for fractures and other minor ailments. It attracted many Inuit who came to Kinngait to receive services and stayed in the settlement. The artist Kenojuak Ashevak recalled moving to Kinngait in 1966 for health care during a pregnancy.³⁹

In the early 1960s, the federal government introduced hostel schooling into the community for children of Inuit families who had not yet settled in Kinngait.⁴⁰ Three hostels were built, but they were never popular among students or families. Children ran away or were taken home to *ilagiit nunagivaktangit* by their parents. Teachers noted that the most successful programs were those that housed children from very distant places, such as Kimmirut, because they could not leave. Parents of students from nearby often opted instead to establish themselves in Kinngait to live where their children were going to school. As a result, the population of the community grew. By 1967, a three-room schoolhouse was in operation in the settlement and four teachers were employed full-time. Classes, however, only went to grade seven and students wishing to attend high school had to move to Yellowknife or Iqaluit.⁴¹ In 1970, the community school had nine teachers instructing 163 students in grades one to eight.

By the early 1960s, adult education courses were being routinely taught in the settlement. They were divided between domestic skills, chiefly for women managing households in the new wooden houses, and a mix of mechanical and clerical skills. Courses were offered in food preparation, hygiene, dressmaking, baking, economics, law, government, firefighting, English, arithmetic, social studies, carpentry, and tool maintenance. Adult programs, just like children's schooling, were part of the government's strategy to prepare Inuit for the expanding sectors of the northern economy and integrate people into mainstream Canadian society. The objective of the government was to

provide Inuit with a training that would allow them to take part in the development of resources in the Arctic. At the time, many Inuit were eager to try out imported ways of living. Qallunaat feared that Inuit culture would be overrun, and individuals would be impoverished, if they were not prepared rapidly to take part in the new economic activities in the north. Most government authorities believed that the Inuit way of life was bound to disappear, and that Inuit needed to adapt as quickly as possible to new economic and political circumstances if they wanted to survive as a people.

It seems likely that access to schooling and involvement in the co-operative contributed to community activism in Kinngait.⁴² When the Council of the Northwest Territories met in Kinngait in 1962, community members presented two petitions, one from the "[Inuit] mothers" and the other from "the men." The mothers were concerned with training, schooling, and interpreters' services at the nursing station. The men supported the mothers' petition and added requests for a seniors' home, better housing, an RCMP detachment, a community-controlled liquor bar, playground and recreational equipment, better reporting about family members in southern hospitals, and protection of the syllabic writing system. Both petitions raised issues about protecting Inuit culture and language, while also ensuring a good economic future for the community.

In 1970, the territorial government in Yellowknife gained authority over education throughout the eastern Arctic. In the following years Inuit, through the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (now Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami), demanded more of a voice in the education of their children and advocated effectively for changes to curricula and the hostel system in order to protect young people's access to traditional knowledge and skills. Inuit leaders in Kinngait were fully aware that youth needed to learn how to hunt, fish, and travel over land and ice. This was noted in official reports and played a role in the decision of some families to return to former *ilagiit nunagivaktangit* and seek funding through the Northwest Territories Outpost Camp grants. In 1977, a group of Kinngarmiut made plans to live at an *ilagiit nunagivaktangit* and to invite youth to stay there for extended periods "to learn about

traditional camp life.”⁴³ According to the *Nunatsiaq News*, youth chose the option of staying in ilagiit nunagivaktangat over having a new recreation centre built in the community.

Housing also encouraged the centralization process in Kinngait. In 1958, the RCMP reported that there were five igluvigait (snow houses) being used in Kinngait. In 1959, there were none.⁴⁴ Instead, Kinngarmiut began moving into low-cost housing units developed by the federal government in the late 1950s.⁴⁵ These houses measured sixteen feet square. At first, they were one-room homes without toilets, stoves, baths, or porches. RCMP officers and other qallunaat often condemned the new houses as being inferior to traditional snow houses and certainly well below the expectations of housing for anyone in the south. Few Inuit had enough cash to buy or build permanent homes. Game ordinances restricted the number of caribou skins available for shelter and Inuit were increasingly relying on purchased clothing that did not provide the warmth required to live in snow houses.⁴⁶ Kinngait received twenty new housing units in 1965 and another twenty-four the following year.⁴⁷ These new units now included a heater, sink, water-storage tank, electric fixtures, and basic furniture. New housing was an important factor in encouraging more Inuit to settle in the community. In speaking to a Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) interviewer in 2004, Sheojuke Toonoo, who was born in 1928 and moved to Kinngait in the 1960s before the birth of one of her children, said moving “didn’t really bother me because I thought we were going to get a house with lots of space.”⁴⁸ Not until the late 1970s, however, would housing be designed and erected in the north that met the basic needs of Inuit by including rooms or outbuildings for processing country food and maintaining hunting equipment and vehicles.

Through the efforts of residents and federal government staff, Kinngait also attracted infrastructure investments earlier than many other Arctic communities did. By the mid-1960s, the community had almost two miles of roads, a public

bathhouse, a community freezer (reported to be used almost entirely by qallunaat in the early 1970s), a powerhouse, and heavy equipment for haulage of sewage, water, and fuel.⁴⁹ A landing strip was built for the community in 1973, and satellite telephone service began a year later.⁵⁰

The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) community hall was erected in 1961 with support from the co-operative and the Handicrafts Guild. The provision of many community services was gradually taken over by the co-operative, although more recently these duties were shifted to local community councils, allowing the co-operative to focus on artistic productions and retail trade.⁵¹

A final factor encouraging Kinngarmiut to move to the community was the active community life. In 1963, RCMP reported, “more and more of the camp [Inuit] are moving into the settlement to live for reason of a more modern living and to enjoy the entertainment which the settlement life provides.”⁵² Anthropologist David Damas has noted this report as one of only a few statements by government agents about the importance of socialization and recreation to an Inuk’s choice to move to a settlement. Inuit themselves have also acknowledged the social value of settlements to be a factor in their decisions.⁵³

SHAPING COMMUNITY LIFE

By 1974, centralization was fully underway in Kinngait. The community had a population of 690, though one in ten were still considered to be hunters. The settlement had an airstrip and twice-weekly flights from Iqaluit. A primary school, an adult education centre, a nursing station, an RCMP detachment, a church, a community hall, telephone service, a post office, and five general stores, including the co-operative, served the community.⁵⁴ Along with the new community spirit was a growing criticism of the impact of modernization—hunters in Kinngait spoke out vigorously during the seventies against the hazards of unregulated mineral exploitation, and the

doubtful legality of the government taking control from Inuit. As Oshoweetok Ipeelee stated in 1974, "Inuit have a legal right to the country. We came here many years ago as our permanent country."⁵⁵ The purpose of this position was simple to Kananginak Pootoogook: "Exploration should cease until land claims are settled."⁵⁶

People continued to adjust to the new economic system. In 1965, the RCMP reported that thirty Kinngarmiut worked full-time for government and private agencies, and that twenty to twenty-five were employed seasonally. Women, men, and youth also earned incomes through arts and crafts production. The co-operative remained successful, although economic, technical, and artistic innovations required federal financing that was never consistent. New quarries for soapstone had to be found and exploited; instructors were needed to teach new techniques; and printmaking and typography equipment required renewal. After some experience with centralized marketing by Canadian Arctic Producers, the community established its own distribution through Dorset Fine Arts, a marketing office in Toronto.

Kinngarmiut also had to adapt to an increasing number of qallunaat who arrived in the community to serve its growing population. In 1965, the RCMP established a new detachment in Kinngait to deal with an increasing number of infractions committed by "the younger generation," who were thought to show no desire to hunt but were not finding employment in the community.⁵⁷

While taking advantage of increasing economic opportunities, many Kinngarmiut continued to hunt. Country food (seal, caribou, char, walrus, and so on) remained the most important source of nutrition for Inuit in the area throughout the 1960s.⁵⁸ Higgins estimated that between 1966 and 1967, 224, 318 pounds of meat, edible internal organs, and blubber were obtained from hunting.⁵⁹ Throughout the 1960s, however, the number of "eligible hunters" in the area decreased significantly. In 1967, 104 of the 120 eligible hunters in the area were living in Kinngait.⁶⁰ In 1969, only 49 hunters were reported as living in Kinngait and

13 more in ilagiit nunagivaktangit. The number in the early 1970s remained around 70. These hunters also needed to cope with strict game-management laws. Wildlife officials and Inuit agreed that game was generally abundant in the area. Hunters took moderate numbers of the three main monitored species, caribou, polar bear, and walrus. They were issued game licenses and were required to record kills for the Canadian Wildlife Service in Ottawa. Responsibility for managing wildlife was transferred to the Northwest Territories government in 1968.

Another consequence suffered by Kinngarmiut following their moves to the hamlet was the decrease in the qimmiit population due to disease and enforcement of the Ordinance Respecting Dogs. Until the early 1960s, outbreaks of rabies and distemper led to temporary decreases in the qimmiit population.⁶¹ In some cases, officials mistakenly attributed the poor health of these qimmiit to starvation, rather than to disease. At various points in the late 1950s and in the 1960s, the RCMP, government employees, and local residents killed qimmiit in Kinngait. In testimony to the QTC, Ejetsiak Peter recalled that he kept a small team. "We always tried to keep them tied up, but sometimes dogs would become loose on their own." Peter said that qimmiit were shot by the RCMP, by other government agents, including social workers, and by Peter himself as a member of the settlement council. Pudlalik Quvianaqtuliaq told QIA interviewers that he moved into Kinngait in the late 1950s with other families so their children could attend school. He remembered that qimmiit were killed, likely by the RCMP, soon after families moved into the community. It caused great hardship for people and no explanations for the killings were given.⁶²

Quvianaqtuliaq and other people who testified recalled that Inuit living in Kinngait increasingly relied on snowmobiles from the mid-1960s onwards for hunting and social travel.⁶³ Mechanized transportation became more reliable and available in the 1960s. The first successful snowmobile for Arctic travel was introduced by Bombardier in 1964. Twin Otter aircrafts were being used across the Arctic by then and oil for outboard motors was more

consistently stocked by the HBC.⁶⁴ In 1962, the RCMP reported that Inuit were being accused of poor maintenance of engines, but that the problem had largely been overcome when the HBC brought in more engine oil. With these improvements, fuel supplies also became more dependable, but many hunters continued to use qimmiit into the early 1970s, although it was difficult for qimmiit to keep up with snowmobiles under good conditions.

By 1976, Kinngait's population was already at 688 people, according to the federal statistics. Population growth no longer depended on people migrating from ilagiit nunagivaktangit—it was now based on natural population increase, which also explains the doubling of the population in the following thirty years.

Conclusion

Inuit have lived on the north shore of Hudson Strait for centuries. Contact with non-Inuit was very limited and slow to develop, although Inuit from the area were making lengthy journeys to trade with whalers around Kimmirut prior to 1900. People in the region were highly adaptable to the new fox-trapping opportunities after 1913, but usually carried this out with more traditional hunts, especially for ringed seal and caribou. After 1950, Kinngarmut felt the same pressures and attractions as other inhabitants of the Qikiqtani Region, and they responded by leaving the land to live more or less permanently around the trading centres. The trading centres had a growing set of other services, such as schools, nursing stations, and places where wage employment was available. By 1970, this centralization was virtually complete. Kinngait had an exceptional opportunity in this time period to develop a local industry and earn worldwide recognition as a centre of artistic production. The financial and cultural benefits, and the business skills developed through the West Baffin Co-operative, are still important parts of community life.



Preparing for seal hunting near Kinngait, 1962.

Credit: Charles Gimpel / Library and Archives Canada / Charles Gimpel fonds / e010952951-v8.

ENDNOTES

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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.

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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 Iglooliorte'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 Saimaqatigiingniq:
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
(Kangiqtuqaapik)
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

