



Qikiqtani Truth Commission

Community Histories 1950-1975

Grise Fiord



Qikiqtani Inuit Association

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Errata

Despite best efforts on the part of the author, mistakes happen.
The following corrections should be noted when using this report:

Administration in Qikiqtaaluk was the responsibility of one or more federal departments prior to 1967 when the Government of the Northwest Territories was became responsible for the provision of almost all direct services. The term “the government” should replace all references to NANR, AANDC, GNWT, DIAND.

Dedication

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



Foreword

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

Iqaluit, Nunavut

2013

**Inuit Owned Lands
Community Area of Grise Fiord**

 Inuit owned lands





Grise Fiord

Ausuittuq

Grise Fiord, located on the southern shore of Ellesmere Island, is the northernmost community in North America. The name Grise was given to the fiord by Norwegian explorer Otto Sverdrup during his exploration expedition from 1898 to 1902. The name means “pig inlet” in Norwegian, referencing the appearance of the walruses that Sverdrup saw in the fiord. The Inuktitut name for the community is Ausuittuq, meaning “the place that never thaws.”

Tuniit and Thule peoples lived in the area from two thousand to five hundred years ago, but migrated away during the sixteenth century. Throughout the following centuries, migrations resulted in periodic but short-term occupancy of areas on Ellesmere Island. During the early twentieth century, with the exception of occasional hunting trips by Inuit from Greenland or northern Baffin Island, the Grise Fiord area remained uninhabited. In 1922, a small enclave of year-round residents was created with the establishment of



View of Grise Fiord

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a small RCMP detachment at Craig Harbour, approximately 55 kilometres east of Grise Fiord. The following year, a second post was established on the Bache Peninsula, but abandoned in 1933. The primary role of the posts was to demonstrate Canadian sovereignty over Canada's Arctic Archipelago.

As part of government-sponsored relocation programs of the 1950s, a permanent Inuit settlement was planned for Ellesmere Island. In 1953 and 1955, families from Pond Inlet who called themselves Mittimatalingmiut or

Tununirmiut, and families from Inukjuak, known as Itivimiut, were moved to the area. The settlement was originally located on the Lindstrom Peninsula, 70 kilometres west of the RCMP detachment, and 8 kilometres west of Grise Fiord. In 1956, the RCMP relocated their post to Grise Fiord, and the Inuit settlement moved in 1961 when the school was opened. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, some residents, especially families from Inukjuak, left the community to return to their previous homes. Others moved to Grise Fiord from Pond Inlet and Inukjuak to be closer to family and friends. By 2011, Grise Fiord's population had reached 130, and the community was serviced by an airport, hotel, the Grise Fiord Co-operative, a school, and an Anglican church.

Today, after calling the community home for half a century, people call themselves Ajuitturmiut. In earlier times, however, they identified themselves by the places from which they were relocated. In 1969, for example, researcher Milton Freeman reported that Inuit from Inukjuak referred to the Pond Inlet families as Maaniamiut (the local inhabitants) and themselves as Inujjuamiut (the Inukjuak people). This distinction reinforced and reflected the strength of family attachments in spite of years of separation, as well as the different backgrounds of the people who were relocated. The new name, Ajuitturmiut, reflects the history of those who have come to create the vibrant Inuit community of Grise Fiord in Canada's High Arctic.

Taissumani Nunamiutautilluta

ILAGIIT NUNAGIVAKTANGIT

The present-day community of Grise Fiord is located on the southern tip of Ellesmere Island, the most mountainous island in the Arctic Archipelago. The original Inuit settlement was located at Lindstrom Peninsula, and in

1961, it moved 8 kilometres east to its current location at Grise Fiord. The Jones Sound area makes up the primary hunting grounds for Ajuitturmiut, encompassing over 97,000 square kilometres. The terrain and environment, while visually striking, are incredibly harsh. The sea is frozen for ten months of the year, with break-up occurring in mid-August. The surrounding mountains provide limited support for wildlife, and overland travel is restricted to valleys and waterways winding between the mountains. From May to August, the sun never sets, and from October to mid-February, it never rises. Grise Fiord is considered one of the coldest communities in the world, with an average yearly temperature of -16 degrees Celsius.

Archaeological records show Tuniit people inhabited Ellesmere Island as early as two thousand years ago. Thule people later settled the area, but had moved away by the sixteenth century. Remains of Thule villages can still be found throughout many of the inlets and fiords of Ellesmere Island. Over the next two centuries, the only Inuit presence on the island was temporary and made up of small groups of people migrating through the area, or hunters from Greenland or northern Baffin Island. In 1856, forty Inuit led by a man named Qidlak migrated north from Baffin Island in search of the “polar Inuit” they had heard about from European explorers. While the majority turned back after spending a couple years on Devon Island, some eventually moved north across Ellesmere Island towards Smith Sound. By 1860, however, they had moved on to Greenland. After that, Ellesmere Island remained generally uninhabited until the 1920s.

The people relocated to Grise Fiord in the 1950s originally came from Pond Inlet on northern Baffin Island, and from Inukjuak in northern Quebec. Everyone had to adapt quickly to the new landscape and environment of Ellesmere Island. Initially the land-use area for the new arrivals was limited to the Jones Sound region. As time went on, and hunters grew more familiar with their surroundings, they travelled farther. By the 1960s, during the annual great spring hunt that took place at the end of March, some hunters travelled as far west as Norwegian Bay and the Bjerne Peninsula.

Others crossed Jones Sound and hunted along the north coast of Devon Island. With the exception of the occasional hunter from Greenland or Resolute Bay, hunters from Grise Fiord had exclusive use of the entire Jones Sound area. Hunters primarily focused on marine mammals. Some terrestrial wildlife was harvested in the lowlands and rolling hills of Ellesmere Island, but the mountainous terrain resulted in most of the island being devoid of game.

The Grise Fiord region is, by far, a superior sealing area. Ringed seals are available year-round throughout the area, and are the primary focus of Ajuitturmiut hunting activities. Winter hunting, between November and the end of April, took place at breathing holes. After April, ringed seals were taken while they basked on the ice, or by harpoon through larger breathing holes. Generally, seals were not hunted at the floe edge because of the long distance to open water. Both bearded and harp seals also migrate into the area, but hooded seals are extremely rare. Aside from trading, Ajuitturmiut used sealskins to make rope, clothes, boots, and handicraft items such as gun cases, rugs, and toys. Bearded sealskin was prized for its durability when made into ropes and tethers.

During the month of July, massive numbers of belugas migrate through the area. In 1963, an estimated three thousand belugas were reported, and in 1966, a herd nearly 1.6 kilometres long and 25 to 35 metres wide was spotted near the settlement. Beluga meat was usually used as qimmiit food, but Ajuitturmiut enjoy the muktuk. Narwhales and walrus were also hunted during periods of open water and break-up, with walrus being considered the best qimmiit food available.

Char was highly valued not only for its taste but because it had been a customary item enjoyed by both the Pond Inlet Inuit and Inukjuak Inuit before the relocations. Unfortunately, there are few lakes in the region and it took the new hunters some time to locate them after their arrival. By the 1970s, approximately twenty lakes that support char had been located, but only three were accessible enough for regular fishing.



Inuit woman, c. 1974

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Limited amounts of land-based animals, including small Peary caribou, were available to supplement the economy and diet of Ajuitturmiut. When they first arrived, the relocatees hunted caribou in the lowlands between Craig Harbour and Harbour Fiord. Later, caribou-hunting grounds were located at Bjorne Peninsula, Svendsen Peninsula, the Makinson Inlet area, Graham Island, southwestern Ellesmere Island and western Devon Island. More recently, large populations can only be found near Blind Fiord on the Raanes Peninsula. Caribou skins provided vital clothing for hunters and first-class bedding materials. However, as the herds moved farther away, and seasonal conditions further limited hunting seasons, Ajuitturmiut were forced to turn to other materials for clothing and bedding. Today, caribou are harvested primarily for meat, providing a welcomed break from a marine-animal-based diet.

Polar bears are also numerous in the area, with a large concentration found at Bear Bay. While also found in high numbers at Coburg Island and near Hell Gate, the treacherous ice conditions of those areas deter Ajuitturmiut hunters. Over the years, the price received for polar bear pelts increased, eventually making up 55% of a family's cash income by the late 1960s. In 1967, a quota of twenty-seven polar bears per year was imposed on Ajuitturmiut hunters, one that they have filled regularly since.

Arctic fox were also trapped as a cash species, but their numbers fluctuated annually. Since 1953, Ajuitturmiut hunters have regularly trapped along the south coast of Ellesmere Island. Traps were usually set while on bear, caribou, or (later) muskox hunting trips. Wolves were occasionally hunted as well, but not in large numbers. Smaller animals, such as ptarmigans, sea birds, geese, ducks, and Arctic hares, were also hunted in conjunction with the harvesting of sea and land animals.

EARLY CONTACTS

The first European reference to Ellesmere Island comes from William Baffin, commander of the ship *Discovery*, while visiting the Jones Sound area in the summer of 1616. The Island was later named after the First Earl of Ellesmere by Commander E. A. Inglefield while on a mission to find the lost Franklin Expedition in 1852. During the nineteenth century, various explorers and whalers visited Jones Sound, but the area was not thoroughly explored until 1899, when Otto Sverdrup began charting the region after being trapped by ice. For three years, he and his men explored and mapped major portions of southern and western Ellesmere Island, and northern Devon Island. While doing so, Sverdrup claimed parts of Ellesmere Island for Norway. This resulted in Canada turning its attentions to the Arctic by first sending explorers, and later the RCMP.

In 1922, the Canadian government moved to establish RCMP detachments on Ellesmere Island in an attempt to assert their claim to the area. At that time, there was only one other RCMP post north of the mainland, located at Herschel Island, west of the Mackenzie River delta. These detachments were also intended to act as small “colonies,” demonstrating Canadian influence in the North. The first detachment was located at Craig Harbour. In 1926, a second post was established on the Bache Peninsula, but was abandoned in 1933. By that time, Norway had relinquished all claims to the Canadian Arctic. With the onset of the Second World War and with the Canadian government’s focus directed elsewhere, the Craig Harbour RCMP detachment was also closed in 1940.

The RCMP often employed Inuit families at the detachments as special constables to help hunt, serve as guides, and assist in maintaining the post. The first Inuit special constable at Craig Harbour was Kakto, from Pond Inlet. Kakto brought with him his spouse, Oo-ar-loo, and their two children. Unfortunately, after only a couple of months, the two children died from

influenza. This resulted in Kakto and Oo-ar-loo returning home to Pond Inlet. After that, all special constables were recruited from Greenland until the post's closure in 1940. At times, one or more families lived at the post, but were never considered a permanent population. When the post was re-opened in August 1951, the Canadian government decided that only Pond Inlet families would be employed, in order to dissuade Inuit from Greenland from coming to the area to hunt. In 1953, the detachment at Craig Harbour was home to one RCMP special constable and his family from Pond Inlet, and two single RCMP constables.

Inuit children and
a woman in a
wheelchair along the
shore of Grise Fiord
NWT ARCHIVES



CHANGING PATTERNS OF LIFE

Life prior to the relocations shaped the experiences of the people who eventually made Grise Fiord their home. While all the relocatees had experience with Qallunaat institutions and culture, the extent to which those contacts had disrupted patterns of Inuit living and knowing varied. In northern Quebec, Itivimiut had been very well acquainted with the three institutions that played a large role in disrupting Inuit life—traders, missionaries, and RCMP. Trade had been prevalent throughout northern Quebec since the eighteenth century. Because of greater competition among trading companies in the area, trade had firmly rooted itself as the primary base of the Itivimiut economy. Consequently, mobility patterns changed as people centralized towards trade centres, relying on furs and credit rather than on customary hunting practices. At the same time, missionaries competed for religious dominance through church and schools. The RCMP was the only government representative in the area taking any responsibility for local Inuit, albeit in a very limited way, through small doses of social services and provisions. By the 1950s, and the time of the relocations, many Itivimiut regularly sent their children to school (thirty-nine children were reported in attendance in 1953) and had become exposed to a sustained Qallunaat presence.

People from Pond Inlet were less burdened by government involvement in their lives, despite their long history of trade. Whalers from Scotland, England, and America had operated in the area since the nineteenth century and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had established a post at Pond Inlet in 1921. While trade played a role in their day-to-day lives, Tununirmiut had yet to embrace settlement life. At the time of the relocations, Pond Inlet had no school. In fact, it would not be until 1959, six years after the first families were relocated to Grise Fiord, that a school opened.

Once in Grise Fiord, however, both groups found themselves in a new landscape living close to strangers with different customs and expectations.

On top of this, Inuit were shocked to learn that they faced strict game laws.

The history of the game laws provides important context for understanding the history of the relocations and the changes in the community. The people relocated to Grise Fiord were affected by game laws to an extent that they had not experienced in their previous homes. Wildlife conservation, as a larger movement, had been gaining momentum in Canada and the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was spurred by the near disappearance of bison from the Canadian and American plains, and the muskox from the Arctic mainland. Although nobody lived permanently in the High Arctic prior to the relocations, restrictions on Qallunaat hunting in the area had been in place since 1887. By July 1917, hunting restrictions under the Northwest Game Act applied to all inhabitants, including Inuit. The act was designed to protect muskox and further restrict the caribou-hunting season throughout the Northwest Territories. It sought to regulate any “Indians or [Inuit] who are bona fide inhabitants of the Northwest Territories” as well as “other bona fide inhabitants of the said territories, and . . . any explorers or surveyors who are engaged in any exploration, survey or other examination of the country.” Inhabitants, as described, were permitted to take caribou, muskox, and bird eggs “only when such persons [were] actually in need of such game or eggs to prevent starvation.” Through the act, the caribou-hunting season was limited to late summer and mid-winter, and all hunting of muskox was prohibited except in specific zones set out by the government from time to time.

The creation of the Arctic Islands Game Preserve (AIGP) in 1926 effectively established permanent boundaries for a conservation area. It also aimed to establish Canadian control over the Canadian Arctic Archipelago by demonstrating a form of functional administration. The Preserve encompassed the High Arctic islands, northwestern Baffin Island, islands as far west as Banks Island, and a small portion of the mainland. The AIGP also further restricted Qallunaat hunting, trapping, trading, and trafficking

inside its boundaries. Qallunaat were not allowed to hunt without a special licence.

In general, the regulations put in place by the Act still applied to local Inuit, and the relocatees were expected to follow the provisions of the AIGP. Since 1932, the RCMP had been tasked with enforcing the regulations, but were sporadic in doing so, as it depended on whether an officer perceived a legitimate “need” in any given situation. For their part, Aujuitturmiut conformed to the regulations. However, throughout the 1960s, they increasingly questioned the legitimacy of legislation imposed on people who had no voice in its creation. In a brief to the Northwest Territories government in 1967, Aujuitturmiut wrote:

For a long time we have respected the law and not killed muskox, even in times of great need. This is because we understand there were few and agreed their number should increase before hunting could take place. It was easier for us to follow this law believing that one day we were to be able to hunt them again . . . You understand hunting is our livelihood; we have no other source of meat but the animals we hunt . . . Very often muskox are the only animals to be seen on our travels. This restraint placed on us in these circumstances is very hard to bear, but we do restrain ourselves because we respect the purpose of this law.

The AIGP was eventually disbanded in 1966, and in 1969, the ban on hunting muskox in the Northwest Territories was rescinded and quotas established.

Sangussaqtauliqtilluta, 1950–1960

The game policies were only part of an escalating government involvement in the Canadian North. Beginning during the Second World War, and increasingly evident in the immediate postwar period, the Canadian government ramped up its presence in the North and became more directly involved in the lives of Inuit. At first cautious about interfering with Inuit trading and subsistence routines, the government became bolder as more Qallunaat and government services appeared in Qikiqtaaluk and other parts of the Arctic. For many officials and Canadians in general, change was inevitable and necessary; however, the desired direction and pace of change was never established with certainty. This made it difficult for anyone—Inuit, RCMP, bureaucrats, businesses—to plan effectively.

In some cases, a perception that Inuit were poor and vulnerable to starvation led the government to act, but it was colonial attitudes and the lack of effective communication that led to harmful decisions. The collapse of fur prices in 1949 became an important motive for the relocation of Inuit. The drop in prices reduced Inuit incomes from furs by about 85%, while the cost of goods doubled. The government saw the effect on relief costs in areas where country food was scarce and people depended on store-bought goods. Government officials were also concerned that the economic downturn in fur prices might drive traders, especially the HBC, out of the Arctic. This would leave the government with sole responsibility for ensuring that Inuit received emergency relief in times of hardship and for providing them with access to manufactured goods, including rifles.

The federal government began pursuing an internal policy of “inducing” Inuit from areas deemed to be “overpopulated” to move to places where game was thought to be more plentiful. Reinforcing this policy was a concurrent

and paternalistic idea that Inuit not already heavily exposed to Qallunaat institutions and ways of life would be better off living farther away from Qallunaat influences. Relocating Inuit to keep them relatively isolated with easier access to game would help the government prevent rising costs associated with Inuit “dependence” on government relief services. As government official Graham Rowley stated in a memorandum concerning a relocation plan to Arviat on Hudson Bay:

This load of furs represents a full season’s trapping for this Eastern Arctic Inuit family
NWT ARCHIVES

So far as I can determine the idea is to get Eskimos and to put them where nobody else can get to them, no [Hudson Bay] company, no missions, only a benevolent Administration. In this way



they would be protected against everybody—except of course the government. I asked who would protect them against the government but this was of course assumed to be a joke.

A parallel view also held that colonization of the High Arctic by Inuit would help assert Canadian sovereignty over the area. The United States had increased its presence in the Canadian North during the Second World War. In the postwar period, it had started building an equally strong military and scientific presence. In reporting on its inquiry into the history of the High Arctic Relocations, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) explained:

This is not to say that sovereignty was necessarily of equal rank with the economic concerns that drove the relocation. It is to say, however, that sovereignty was a factor that, in the minds of some people who played key roles in the project, reinforced and supported the relocation and contributed to the attractiveness in their minds of a relocation to uninhabited islands in the High Arctic.

Crucial to the relocation plan was the presence of RCMP detachments. Police officers could provide supplies and help to Inuit, monitor the success of the experiment, and represent a strong Canadian presence.

The government first tried High Arctic relocations in 1934 when ten families from Cape Dorset, Pangnirtung, and Pond Inlet were relocated to Dundas Harbour, on Devon Island, and placed under the care of the HBC. The experiment was short-lived, as the HBC considered the environment too severe and the relocated families were dissatisfied with life there. The relocatees were later transferred to Arctic Bay and Fort Ross. The RCMP also attempted seasonal relocations in the early 1950s near the community of Inukjuak. Inuit hunters were persuaded to move to the nearby King George Islands and Sleeper Islands on the Belchers during the fall months



RCMP boat on dry
ground, Grise Fiord,
July 1961
NWT ARCHIVES

in order to diminish pressure on local game. The local RCMP considered this short-term, short-distance relocation program a success, but the government remained concerned about access to game in the Inukjuak area.

In 1952, the Canadian government decided to make another attempt at permanent relocation to the High Arctic. Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island,

and Craig Harbour and Bache Peninsula on Ellesmere Island, were chosen as potential relocation sites. They were purported to be plentiful in game, although no wildlife studies had been conducted there and no Inuit had permanently resided in the area for centuries. Bache Peninsula was eventually abandoned as a potential location because the site was too difficult to access.

The Inuit targeted for relocation were those living in northern Quebec, specifically the Inukjuak area. Officials reported that people in Inukjuak were having difficulty sustaining themselves due to a lack of sufficient game, but the problems they faced were more complicated than that. Northern Quebec had seen multiple trade companies vying for Inuit customers for decades. As a result, the companies competed with one another by offering high prices for fur, low prices for goods, and easy credit. As a result, people were spending more time trapping for trade while increasing their dependency on store-bought food and clothes purchased on credit against social benefits, especially family allowance. They lived near or in settlements, and often their children attended school. Therefore, when fur prices dropped, the number of people struggling to pay for food and other necessities alarmed the government.

When making decisions about relocating Inuit, however, evidence firmly points to the fact that Inuit were never fully informed of options or potential consequences. The question of consent in the High Arctic relocations is a contentious issue. Inuit were reluctant to relocate for many reasons, including the rational fear of losing a connection to their homeland. Although the government and RCMP referred to the relocatees as “volunteers,” the selection of families fell to individual officers. The government expected that “resourceful trappers” would be chosen or volunteer for relocations. Evidence shows, however, that families who were the most dependent on government assistance were more likely to be relocated.

Oral testimonies from RCAP and testimonies collected by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) show that Inuit were afraid of the RCMP officers and felt pressured to move.

George Eckalook, whose family was relocated from Inukjuak in 1955, told the QIA that his parents at first “did not agree to the move but later on they agreed but in their hearts, they were reluctant to leave . . . We left our relatives, close relatives.” Simeonie Amagoalik, also from Inukjuak, told the QIA that he felt pressured to relocate as well. “It seemed like I had no other choice but to say yes.” Many people remember receiving little or no detail on the way the relocations would work, especially that families were going to be divided between different communities. These factors strongly negate the idea of a voluntary move.

Some government agents were concerned from the outset that the relocation experiments might not work. To alleviate their concerns, Alexander Stevenson, the Federal Administrator of the Arctic, stated that, if after two years relocatees were “dissatisfied or unhappy in their new environment they could return to Port Harrison [Inukjuak].” The RCMP involved in the planning and implementation of the relocation made a similar promise. Henry Larsen, the Officer Commanding “G” Division (the Arctic Division), promised, “families will be brought home at the end of one year if they so desire.” These promises were never honoured. It was not until 1996, following the RCAP recommendations and other political initiatives that relocatees were given compensation and an opportunity to be returned home.

On August 29, 1953, six Inuit families arrived at Craig Harbour with their qimmiit and personal possessions, accompanied by RCMP Constable G. K. Sargent. Craig Harbour was the first stop for the ship *C. D. Howe*, and the first point at which the relocatees were told they would be separated. John Amagoalik, who was later dropped off at Resolute, recalled the arrival at Craig Harbour:

When we got near [Craig Harbour] the RCMP came to us and they told us; half of you have to get off here. And we just went into a panic because they had promised that they would not separate us . . . I remember we were all on the deck of the ship, the *C. D.*

Howe, and all the women started to cry. And when women start to cry, the dogs join in. It was eerie.

The following month, two more families originally destined for Cape Herschel, one from Inukjuak and the other from Pond Inlet, were dropped off at Craig Harbour. Shortly thereafter, everyone was moved to the Lindstrom Peninsula, approximately 70 kilometres west of the detachment and 8 kilometres west of present-day Grise Fiord. Constable Sargent stated in his December 1953 report to “G” Division that the Lindstrom Peninsula location was chosen because it reduced the possibility of Inuit becoming dependent on the RCMP, but also allowed some contact. He also felt the site was located a reasonable distance from the caribou herds, which he felt would be at risk from overhunting by Inuit.

The families from Pond Inlet were included in the relocation because the government felt that they would be able to help the Itivimiut families adapt to a more northern environment. It is important to remember how different life in the High Arctic was from northern Quebec. The distance between Inukjuak and Grise Fiord was more than 2,200 kilometres. Grise Fiord also experienced three months of total darkness, much more extreme temperatures, different ice and snow conditions, and different animal patterns. In northern Quebec, some wood was available for building supplies and for fuel. Itivimiut had also been accustomed to attending school, worshipping, trading, and receiving medical care within developed settlements. Pond Inlet, only 433 kilometres away from Grise Fiord, was well above the tree line and had a similar climate to Grise Fiord, and there most Tununirmiut still resided in *ilagiit nunagivaktangit*. Tununirmiut also had some experience with full-winter darkness.

Nevertheless, both groups struggled from the moment they arrived. Many people remember the shock they felt when they realized that there were no supplies available to help them set up. Larry Audlaluk recalled for the RCAP report an argument between his uncle and the RCMP over the

lack of boats available for hunting. He recounted that his father had been told not to worry about bringing anything, to just pack tents and personal possessions. Samuel Arnakallak, from Pond Inlet, shared a similar memory in the RCAP report:

All the people who went to Craig Harbour were used to being supplied with the white man's trade goods and had not brought much from their original homes. They were under the impression that they were going to a land of plenty where everything was going to be provided. If they had been told they had to bring their own supplies, they would have done so. As it was, they were very poorly supplied because no one told them that they would have to fend for themselves. When they first pitched their tents at Craig Harbour, they did not have any light. They had a stone stove but no light to eat by. One man had a flashlight and he used his flashlight when they were having a meal. Then the flashlight was passed from shelter to shelter so that people could eat.

People also had difficulty finding food as they adapted to the new environment, different ice conditions, and hunting regulations. Itivimiut were also accustomed to a varied subsistence diet that included birds and their eggs, fish, whales, seals, walrus, and caribou. When the relocated families arrived in Grise Fiord in September, they faced strict restrictions on caribou and muskox hunting. Samwillie Elijasialak's experiences were also summarized in the RCAP report:

His mother and his father told him what they were promised. They were promised plentiful caribou in the new land . . . What they found was very different. They were told right off that, "you can only catch one caribou per year for your family. That's the regulation." And that, "you are not allowed to kill any musk-ox. You are

liable to a \$5,000 fine or be arrested if you kill any musk-ox.” He wonders why the police even bothered mentioning caribou and musk-ox and the plentifulness of these animals when they were trying to recruit people.

Obtaining fresh water also proved difficult for the new arrivals. Fresh water had to be obtained from the sea ice because the area’s geography made it very difficult to draw water from lakes or rivers. It took a long time for everyone, especially people from Inukjuak who had previously had easy access to drinking water, to learn how to recognize non-salt water among the ice pieces on the sea.

Limited supplies of caribou hide for clothing, inadequate ammunition supplies, cold temperatures, and three months of total darkness that began only two months after their arrival compounded the effects on the relocatees. Elijah Nutaraq told *Makivik News* in 1989:

I assumed that the far north had the same terrain as the Inukjuak area. It turned out that the land was not the same, and that the sun behaved differently in those latitudes. . . . It got darker and eventually disappeared for good in November. . . . We couldn’t get used to the never-ending darkness.

The dark period was especially hard on the women and children as they were confined to the settlement. Anna Nungaq shared her memory of her first experience with such long periods of darkness in a 1989 interview. “Practically for a year I slept very little, because I was so scared, threatened . . . It is also very, very cold. Because I had never been in a place where there is no daylight at all, I was so scared and thought there would never be light again.”

The first years on the Lindstrom Peninsula were characterized by change and uncertainty. Added to all of these challenges were the loss of friendships and kinships with the move and the cultural and language

differences between Itivimiut and Tununirmiut. Many of the families from Pond Inlet had been told that the people from Inukjuak were poor and used to living on relief, but Itivimiut did not consider themselves to be poor or in need. On top of this was the expectation by relocatees from Pond Inlet that they would be compensated for helping the Itivimiut adapt to the northern environment. No payment was ever received, which likely fuelled resentment over the relocations and the situation in which they found themselves. One anthropologist recorded that “indifference, ridicule, and even hostility were not uncommon features of intergroup relations.”

The following spring, many families expressed an interest in leaving. They were given assurances that they would be allowed to return to their homes in Inukjuak or Pond Inlet after a year or two if they did not like the new location. Many people remember this promise being made. Unfortunately, it was never considered as a serious option by the government, who wanted to see the relocations succeed. Samwillie Elijasialak recalled:

When our parents attempted to make the case for returning, they were told outright that there’s no possible way for them to ever go back and in fact some government officials said, “If you want to return, you are going to have to find other people to take your place before we allow you to go back.” This was said by people where no appeal was available to a higher authority.

A few years later, RCMP claimed that people were no longer requesting to go home, but were interested in having their family and friends join them in Grise Fiord. However, there is much evidence that life remained difficult for the relocatees. Within the first year, an Itivimiut Elder had been appointed camp leader by the RCMP. Unfortunately, he died of a heart attack during his first year. A lack of a good leader increased divisions between the two groups, and as a result, the settlement suffered. By 1955, discussions about dividing the settlement were already taking place. Different beliefs,

distinct dialects, and separate tastes had led each group to hold the other in low esteem. By 1958, the Inukjuak families had moved to a new site 3 kilometres away. Both groups tried to augment their numbers by encouraging family and friends to move to Grise Fiord. Former RCMP officer Terry Jenkin shared his view of the community in 1962, the year that he was posted to Grise Fiord. “What it boiled down to was that there were two groups but there was no fighting, just not a lot of interaction as there would have been if they had been from the same community.” For Jenkin, the divisions were overemphasized by some observers.

As news drifted south about the apparent success of the settlement at Grise Fiord, more families from Pond Inlet, Inukjuak, and even Pangnirtung and Baffin Island moved north. In 1955, two more Itivimiut families were moved to Grise Fiord as part of the same relocation program; however, one family would not arrive until 1957 after being delayed at Arctic Bay.

Similar to those that had come before them, the new families were disappointed with what they found on their arrival. Rynee Flaherty, who arrived with her husband and children from Inukjuak, told the QTC that her first impression of the settlement was that “there was absolutely nothing up there.”

During the 1950s, the RCMP remained the primary contact for Inuit with the Canadian government. In 1956, they moved their post closer to the Lindstrom Peninsula settlement, establishing a detachment at Grise Fiord. They felt that the mountains would provide additional shelter from the winds. In early 1960, the RCMP reported four Tununirmiut families living at the original Lindstrom Peninsula settlement, eight Itivimiut families living at the new break-off settlement nearby, and two families living at the Grise Fiord location.

Unlike other Inuit communities, the relocatees also had to adjust to the fact that there was no HBC post nearby. A small trading store was established next to the RCMP detachment at Craig Harbour during the summer of 1954, and had moved to the new location at Grise Fiord in 1956. An Inuk,

Thomasie Amagoalik, was responsible for looking after the store, while the RCMP handled the bookwork. Unfortunately, the store was poorly supplied and often ran out of materials and goods, as Rynee Flaherty remembered in the RCAP report.

They were dumped in a place where there was no grocery, no milk and her youngest son, Peter, almost starved to death because she was not breast feeding him. She tried to make formula for him by mixing flour with water . . . In the spring, there was no flour, no milk, no sugar and she could only feed her little son small pieces of seal meat. When the *C.D. Howe* would come, it would stay only for a few hours and would drop just a few supplies that were supposed to be used for the whole year . . . She still cries about how she almost starved her son.

During the late 1950s, drastic declines in caribou accompanied by a decline in fox numbers resulted in the RCMP encouraging more carving and the making of handicrafts in an attempt to supplement Ajuitturmiut incomes. A supply of stone was shipped each year on the *C. D. Howe*, but most years the rocks that were received were of very poor quality and were unusable. By 1959, the RCMP reported that more money was being brought in from people making articles “pertaining to their old mode of life,” such as kayaks, snow goggles, bow drills, fishing spears, bow-and-arrow sets, and harpoons. In December 1960, the Grise Fiord Eskimo Co-operative Limited was formed. It took over the old store in March 1961. An Inuk, Akpaleepik, was elected president, but an RCMP member continued to serve as secretary-treasurer because the RCMP wanted to keep control over the bookkeeping and regulate people’s spending.

For Terry Jenkin, the community was welcoming and interesting. He told the QTC:



RCMP constable
examining harp seal
skin with Aksakjuk in
front of co-op store,
Grise Fiord, 1967

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I really enjoyed my year at Grise Fiord. It had two regular police and two special constables, and ten to twelve other families. It was a good community. They did not have the prosperity of Resolute. They were hunters and trappers. I operated the Inuit co-op store. I didn't have any training for this. I learned on the job. We had to order our supplies in; we might have had some guidelines. We ordered our supplies and asked locals what they like and what they could afford. The difference with Resolute was the wage economy

and goods to trade. One could order things through mail order. Grise Fiord could not do that. They only had government allowance, and hunting and trapping.

Nunalinnguqtitauliqtiluta, 1960–1975

AGENDAS AND PROMISES

Despite the hardships faced, and in spite of the cultural and physical divides in the community, the relocatees at Grise Fiord continued to adapt to their new environment. By the early 1960s, newcomers and natural population increases had boosted the population of the area to seventy people, including two RCMP officers and two Inuit special constables living at Grise Fiord. At this time, there was a change in government attitudes towards Inuit across Canada's Arctic. Officials and politicians developed a newfound interest in what they termed the "welfare" of Inuit, and throughout the next two decades a number of government programs aimed at education, health care, and housing were introduced.

A federal day school was sent to Ellesmere Island in 1961; however, the government had provided no indication as to where the school should be built. The RCMP recommended the school be constructed at the Grise Fiord location because it was the only area with suitable land for further expansion. They recognized that, with the extreme temperatures and the long dark period, wherever the school was built would have to be able to support the movement of the entire population, as it would be too dangerous for students to commute. Grise Fiord had a good water supply nearby

and the weather was milder than in other locations. It was also the only location, aside from Craig Harbour, that provided a suitable approach for supply ships. The RCMP conducted a survey among Ajuitturmiut families and all agreed that the school should be built at Grise Fiord and that they would move their families to the area. Terry Jenkin recalled for the QTC that, “in my memory, it was almost our decision locally that we should be together. We made the proposal by radio, and I think we got approval and everyone came together at the main settlement.”

The school was opened in 1962 and had one permanent teacher on staff. By the end of the year, the RCMP reported that students were attending regularly and that two nights a week there were classes in the construction of handicrafts available for adults. The school building was also used as a community centre, where weekly dances and movies were hosted, as well as the weekly Girl Guide and Wolf Cub meetings. Over the next couple of years, more adult education classes were started in sewing, cooking, and art. A second classroom was constructed in 1968, and by 1969, a second permanent teacher had arrived.

Since 1953, and the arrival of the first relocatees, health care had been a challenge. Generally, day-to-day health care was the responsibility of the RCMP who regularly radioed Pangnirtung for advice. The *C.D. Howe* also visited the settlement once a year to conduct examinations. The isolation of the community always became apparent whenever there was a medical emergency or outbreak. In 1959, an Inuk man became ill with stomach problems. After consulting with Pangnirtung, the RCMP arranged for immediate evacuation via an RCAF aircraft from Goose Bay, Labrador. The plane arrived two days after the illness had been reported, remained overnight, and left the next day with the patient, who went on to make a satisfactory recovery. While, in this instance, response times had proved to be reasonable, the reliance on outside help was not always so efficient. In 1960, an epidemic of whooping cough caused one death and the serious illness of six children. Because of radio problems, the RCMP could not

contact Resolute for help. An American camp in Greenland picked up the signal, but could not reach the community due to poor weather conditions. Eventually, a doctor and medication was flown in from Ottawa. This event triggered a series of memos in October and November of 1960 from the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources discussing the difficulties the department was encountering getting medical attention and supplies to Grise Fiord. Unfortunately, there were no immediate solutions. The RCMP continued to handle daily health care issues and emergencies, and medical staff on the *C.D. Howe* continued to be the only real health care contact for Ajuitturmiut until a nurse arrived in 1971.

Another major challenge for the relocated families was housing. The RCMP had expected the relocatees to build “traditional” homes from natural materials, but the Itivimiut had no experience with using stone and sod for building shelters. Even the Tununirmiut were used to having some access to wood. On top of that, snow conditions were different on Ellesmere Island, making the construction of snow houses difficult. Between 1953 and 1955, scrap lumber was scavenged from the RCMP detachment at Craig Harbour and used to supplement canvas and local materials for houses. The houses were heated with seal-oil lamps and insulated with local plant material and imported buffalo and reindeer hides attained from the local RCMP-run store.

In 1959, the AANDC granted loans to five families to purchase housing. The loans were part of the Eskimo Loan Fund, set up in 1952. That year five low-cost permanent housing units were shipped to Grise Fiord and the Lindstrom Peninsula. When Itivimiut and Tununirmiut moved their respective settlements to Grise Fiord in 1961, they each set up their houses on opposite sides of the RCMP buildings, thereby maintaining a division even in the new settlement. At the same time, five additional houses were constructed, bringing the total number of houses to ten. The houses were generally 12 feet by 16 feet, and were expected to house five to six people. Not only were the new accommodations incredibly cramped, but five of the houses had been constructed without chimneys because the proper sup-

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Paulassie’s wife,
Anna, with three
daughters on steps
of new house at
Grise Fiord, 1967

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plies had not been received. By 1962, only one Inuk, Samwillie Elijasialak, had opted to live in a makeshift house he constructed from scrap materials rather than purchase a house via the Eskimo Loan Fund. In 1964, all of the houses were again moved into one row on the east side of the police and school buildings. Even at this point though, the families from Inukjuak and those from Pond Inlet set up their homes at a distance from one another. They continued to remain separate within the settlement.

In an attempt to deal with the issues of overcrowding within houses, the AANDC erected seven prefabricated three-bedroom houses in 1966. The average rent was \$16 a month, and included electricity, heating, fuel, and garbage removal. The old houses were dismantled or converted into workshops. By the following year, the population of Grise Fiord had reached ninety-one, and all of the families were living in three-bedroom houses.

SHAPING COMMUNITY LIFE

The population of Grise Fiord shifted throughout 1960s and 1970s. Some Inuit left Grise Fiord in search of wage employment; others left in search of spouses. Many Ajuitturmiut often requested to move to Resolute, as they were interested in the development and the comforts it afforded, as well as the many opportunities for wage employment. During the spring of 1959, a family from Grise Fiord had been temporarily trapped at Resolute during a measles outbreak and had decided to stay. This decision prompted a reaction on the part of the RCMP who felt that if they agreed to let one family move, the rest would want to follow suit. This problem continued plaguing the RCMP throughout the 1960s and 1970s as they continued to dissuade people from leaving Grise Fiord.

In addition, Ajuitturmiut often had to look outside the community for spouses because marriage partners were limited in Grise Fiord. This was exacerbated by the fact that marriages between Itivimiut and Tununirmiut

were widely frowned upon and generally resisted. Ajuitturmiut often looked for spouses in Resolute, especially people originally from Inukjuak, as that was the closest location where they could find potential matches from their hometown. At the same time, Inuit also moved to Grise Fiord from other parts of Qikiqtaaluk in order to be with friends and family who had relocated earlier.

In the 1960s, the RCMP began reporting more on the divisions that were affecting the community. They especially drew attention to the lack of leadership and the problems it entailed. In their 1967 report the RCMP explain that:

The greatest obstacle locally to morale is the noticeable division between the Pond Inlet and Port Harrison [Inukjuak] Eskimo. No form of leadership is evident with this division and no one Eskimo is willing to make decisions affecting the community. Having a representative from each group results in no communication between representatives and again no decision being made. This greatly hampers any community projects wherein the Eskimo is encouraged to organize, decide and produce results using his own initiative.

Nevertheless, during the 1960s, Ajuitturmiut from both groups began to exert influence over the development of local affairs by forming a housing committee and local community groups. The housing committee at Grise Fiord was, from its start, an all-Inuit committee, which was significant for the community. It was the first time Ajuitturmiut were acting free from outside Qallunaat influences. In 1967, Grise Fiord hunters were at the forefront of successful challenges to federal sport-hunting permits for muskox and worked to increase their quotas for polar bears. In 1969, the Northwest Territories government gave the Grise Fiord hunters an annual muskox quota of twelve, which was later raised to twenty in 1973.

Also by 1973, Grise Fiord hunters had attained a quota of thirty-two polar bears. During the 1970s, Grise Fiord residents also spoke out against the expansion of mineral and oil exploration. They often criticized the negative impacts seismic testing would have on local animal populations and the government's failure to conduct proper studies or consult with local residents.

Wage employment was slow to develop in Grise Fiord. Up until the 1960s, the economy had been firmly rooted in hunting and trapping, supplemented by the sale of carvings and handicrafts. In 1961, with the arrival of the school and housing, a small construction program was started to provide temporary wage employment. While the construction program provided limited additional income, the community's economy continued to remain solidly grounded in hunting and trapping until the mid-1960s. By 1965, only three Inuit were employed full time, two as special constables and one as a school janitor.

By 1967, however, many men were moving between temporary wage employment and hunting. The arrival of houses for construction often provided all the men with temporary employment. Inconveniently, the ship carrying the supplies arrived in August, the same time that the ice broke up allowing canoes and boats access to the water for hunting. As the RCMP reported in 1967:

Following the sealift, naturally all available men were hired to haul and store the incoming supplies. Construction of local houses then started and carried through September and October. All men were hired. September, being the only month when seal, whale and walrus are readily available in great numbers, passed with the men being torn between making as much money as possible on the construction project or hunting for their needs. Work on construction took precedence.

Many hunters had to resort to hunting at seal-holes in all temperatures in order to get enough food after the construction season was over. By 1970, the economy had shifted and the largest portion of income now came from wage earnings. By 1972, all men had wage employment and only hunted on evenings and weekends by snowmobile or boat.

The shooting of qimmiit by authorities also resulted in a clear disruption to Inuit life and hunting patterns. Qimmiit were essential to their mobility and an integral aspect of everyday life so the unexpected and violent loss of a man's qimmiit was a painful wound.

Dog teams in Grise Fiord were large (about ten qimmiit) and generally healthy, according to RCMP reports in the early 1960s. With the exception of two qimmiit that tested positive for rabies in 1965, there

Young Inuit boy
holding two walrus
tusks at Grise Fiord,
1967

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was no evidence of serious disease among qimmiit populations in Grise Fiord. Between 1964 and 1967, the RCMP reported inoculating around 160 animals.

As well, RCMP rarely commented on a “dog problem” in Grise Fiord, which may have been due to low number of Qallunaat living in the settlement. As part of the Ordinance Respecting Dogs, qimmiit were required to be tied up at all times. Nonetheless, Jopee Kiguktak explained to the QTC that “loose dogs were always shot.” Other qimmiit appear to have been shot without any explanation. Jarloo Kiguktak told the QTC in 2008 about the day his father’s qimmiit were killed:

When my father and I were in the house, we heard some shootings. . . . We looked through the window and saw the police were

People in skin clothing
with dog team and
two qamutiks outside
co-op trading store.

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shooting the dogs. After he shot the dogs that were tied up, he never said a word to us or anybody in the house. Nobody came to tell us why the dogs were being shot. Although I was a child, I remember this part because I saw it myself. Those dogs were very dear to us. It was very painful.

Kiguktak believes that qimmiit may have been shot because the government wanted people to switch to snowmobiles. He noted that after the killings, his father “had no choice but to try to purchase a Ski-Doo.” As mentioned, the RCMP provide no explanation for the shootings in their reports; rather, they briefly noted a small decline in the number of qimmiit in one year, from 1966 to 1967, and reported in 1967 that “the dogs saw little work and were used as stand-bys to the skidoo [*sic*]. Hunters not owning skidoos would team with skidoo owners to check their traplines [*sic*].”

By 1967, the RCMP noted five snowmobiles had been purchased by local hunters. Additional machines had been supplied to the RCMP and the two Inuit special constables. The following year, the RCMP reported sixteen snowmobiles in the community, and that they had ceased keeping dog teams themselves. Some hunters, however, continued to rely almost exclusively on qimmiit.

Some people found there were benefits to hunting with snowmobiles rather than with dog teams. Snowmobiles allowed hunters to find distant caribou more quickly, to check traplines using headlamps during the dark season, and to collect fresh-water ice more efficiently. The RCMP explained:

A trip by skidoo was made to Baumann Fiord in October for caribou hunting. Ten caribou were shot and five were immediately brought back to the settlement. A later skidoo trip retrieved the remainder of the meat. This trip, which took 10-11 days by dog team in the past, can be made by skidoo in 3 days.

While owning a snowmobile also meant that a hunter no longer needed to hunt for qimmiit food, there were downsides to using snowmobiles as well. They often broke down and had very short life expectancies compared to qimmiit. In an article published in *Inukshuk* newspaper, the author noted that:

When someone goes far away for a hunt usually two people go together. We have this tradition that when someone goes out far away we do not want to see them alone as one skidoo might get broken. Then if that happens they can always use the other and just put the broken machine on the sled.

At the same time, the costs associated with snowmobile ownership were much higher than those associated with owning qimmiit. Between 1965 and 1967, before many people had purchased snowmobiles, the average cash income of a hunter from the sale of furs was around \$550, with expenses of approximately \$572. Between 1969 and 1972, the annual income from furs had increased to \$890, but expenses had jumped to \$1,846, due primarily to the use and ownership of snowmobiles. While snowmobiles definitely shortened the travel and harvesting times, and eliminated the need to hunt for qimmiit food, the costs associated with owning one of the machines often outweighed their benefits. Nevertheless, snowmobiles facilitated a transition from a hunting-and-trapping-based economy to a wage-based economy during the late 1960s, early 1970s.

While some people had grown confident in their abilities to live in what had, at first, been an incredibly unfamiliar and difficult environment, others never forgot the impact of the High Arctic relocation programs. As Rynee Flaherty told the QTC, life in Grise Fiord had become “a lifestyle. It became home.” For others, however, it would never be home. During the 1970s and into the 1980s, many people petitioned the government to return to Inukjuak or Pond Inlet. In 1988, the government paid for many to return home. During investigations in the 1990s into the relocations, both

before and during the period of the RCAP report on the High Arctic relocations, the federal government stood firm on its position that the relocation was a success. Nevertheless, relocatees continued to press the case that they unwittingly participated in an ill-conceived “experiment” and demanded acknowledgement of wrongdoing on the part of the government. In 1996, the Canadian government signed a memorandum of agreement with the Makivik Corporation acknowledging the contributions of the relocated Inuit to a “Canadian presence” in the High Arctic and the “hardship, suffering and loss” encountered during the initial years of the relocation. While the Agreement led to \$10 million being awarded to the survivors of the relocation, the government refused to issue a formal apology. Many people in Grise Fiord, as well as others who were relocated as part of the government programs, are still waiting for this apology. Larry Audlaluk spoke to the QTC in 2008 about the importance of receiving an apology.

The bottom line is that we are seeking an apology . . . What still hurts me as a survivor is that what we know and claim today is still not fully acknowledged by the federal government, [and] the biggest problem was that the plan was done so poorly.

This history does not change for him, however, the fact that Grise Fiord is his home. “We are not hesitant to be here; we are determined to stay here and make it our home . . . We have earned our right to stay.” Today, Grise Fiord remains a community defined, in part, by the experiences of the relocation. As Martha Flaherty told the QTC, “There is a lot of healing to do yet with people who were separated and relocated. There is so much unfinished business. We need a lot of healing. If we don’t do it now I don’t know what is going to happen.”

Qikiqtaaluk Communities



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- and Ningiuq, “A Speech to Industry,” *Inukshuk* (4 January 1974), p. 8.
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 - Chairman: Ningiuq, “A Speech to Industry,” p. 8.

Much Canadian writing about the North hides social, cultural, and economic realities behind beautiful photographs, individual achievements, and popular narratives. Commissioned by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, this historical work and the companion volume of thematic reports weave together testimonies and documents collected during the Qikiqtani Truth Commission.

As communities in the Baffin region face a new wave of changes, these community histories describe and explain events, ideas, policies, and values that are central to understanding Inuit experiences and history in the mid-20th century.

