
Backgrounder

August 14, 2019

Qikiqtani Truth Commission

Work that led up to the creation of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) began in 2000, when the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and the Makivik Corporation of Nunavik called for the Government of Canada to launch a public inquiry into the killing of qimmiit (sled dogs).

In 2002, QIA established committees to examine issues related to social policy, language, the killing of qimmiit and relocations. In 2004, QIA began collecting testimony directly from Inuit to better understand how government policies affected them and their families, and profoundly and irreversibly altered their way of life.

The Government directed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to look into the allegations surrounding the killing of qimmiit, and report to Parliament. QIA was deeply disappointed with the RCMP report, which they felt contradicted and rejected Inuit accounts of this history.

As the Government of Canada did not create a public inquiry, in 2007 QIA established an independent truth commission to gather its own account of what happened to Qikiqtani Inuit between 1950 and 1975. The Qikiqtani Truth Commission was the first independent truth commission of its kind, led by an Indigenous organization.

Approximately 350 people testified through public hearings to uncover the truth about the Government of Canada's policies and practices.

The Qikiqtani Truth Commission's Final Report, *Achieving Saimaqatigiingniq*, distills three years of interviews, testimony, and archival research about the experiences of Qikiqtani Inuit with modern-day colonialism. The report includes 25 recommendations.

Findings

Between 1950 and 1975, the Government of Canada was the primary cause of change in the Qikiqtani Region. A few examples of the actions undertaken by the Government include:

- Forced relocation of Inuit, which resulted in family separation, loss of community and culture in order to create 13 permanent settlements, where Inuit were promised a “better life” that did not materialize.



- Promises of basic housing and essential services were often unfulfilled, and houses that were built were completely unsuitable for arctic conditions.
- Forcing Inuit children to attend residential schools and colonial institutions where English was the only language used, causing many Inuit to lose their ability to speak Inuktitut, resulting in the loss of culture and traditions and family connections. Parents were told they would lose their family allowance, which had become essential to survival in settlements, if children did not attend school.
- Killing of qimmiit, stripping Inuit of the basic tools needed for travel and the procurement of food. Given the critical role of qimmiit to Inuit, this policy had a significant negative impact on those affected, including creating food insecurity in the Arctic.
- These policies resulted in irreparable harm and intergeneration trauma that endures today among Qikiqtani Inuit

For a synopsis of the report, see “Action of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission” report on the QIA website www.qia.ca, http://www.qia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/QIA-QTC-English_FINAL-LobbyingKit-2019-06-13_LOW.pdf

For full report findings, visit the QTC website: <https://www.qtcommission.ca/en>

The path forward

On August 14, 2019, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, on behalf of the Government of Canada, officially apologized to Qikiqtani Inuit. The apology is the culmination of work between Qikiqtani Inuit Association and the Government of Canada. The announcement included the a commitment to establish the Saimaqatigiingniq Fund, with financial support from the Government to help design and develop programming to be administered by QIA to promote Inuit culture, healing and well-being for current and future generations.