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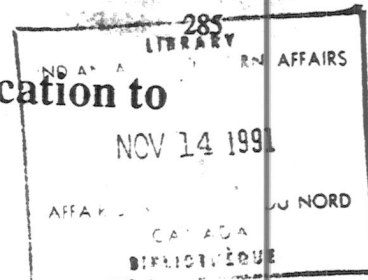
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Out in the cold: Canada's experimental Inuit relocation to Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay

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ABSTRACT. In 1953-55 the Canadian government experimentally relocated Inuit (Eskimo) families from the region of Port Harrison (Inukjuak), on Quebec's Ungava peninsula, to Ellesmere and Cornwallis Islands in the Arctic Archipelago. Today Inuit relocatees allege that they were deceived by the government and suffered greatly as a result of the experiment. The government asserts that the relocation was undertaken for humanitarian reasons. The controversy has recently resulted in hearings before a Canadian parliamentary committee on aboriginal affairs and the Human Rights Commission. A study of the relocation issue prepared for the government, known as the 'Hickling Report', rejects Inuit claims of mistreatment. In this paper the Hickling report's findings are assessed. Contrary to the report's conclusions, documentation suggests that one of the government's motives for undertaking the relocation pertained to Canadian sovereignty and exercising 'effective occupation' of the islands.

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Introduction

In March 1990, members of Canada's parliamentary standing committee on aboriginal affairs heard testimony from Inuit who had been the subject of a 1950s government relocation experiment. Eleven Inuit families from Port Harrison (now Inukjuak), northern Quebec were relocated 2250km north aboard the government ship *C. D. Howe* to the high Arctic. The operation was developed as a colonization plan (Larsen 1952b). The new 'colonies' at Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay in the Arctic archipelago (the Queen Elizabeth Islands) became the northernmost Inuit settlements in Canada (Figure 1). The Inuit recounted years of suffering and neglect as a result of their relocation.

Stark contrasts between project assessments by officials and the words of Inuit survivors now form a central part of the debate. At the request of Parliament, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) was required to submit a report examining the allegations. A report was prepared for DIAND by the Hickling Corporation, a consultancy firm, and tabled in September 1990. The 'Hickling Report' (1990: 6) concludes that 'the evidence we examined does not support the allegation that the Government committed wrongdoing in the planning and conduct of the project'.

However, a number of the statements and conclusions given in the Hickling report are unsound. In this paper, the results of an investigation of government documents and police files, some newly-released, provide a chronicle of the relocation's diverse socio-economic impact, much of

which substantiates Inuit testimony of mistreatment (Marcus 1990). I analyse the reasons the government has given for undertaking the experiment, and focus on three additional motives related to economic policy incentives, moral convictions and sovereignty concerns.

Volunteers for rehabilitation?

The relocation was organized as a joint operation of the Canadian government's Department of Resources and Development (DRD) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The public reason given for the relocation was 'to determine how well Eskimos from southern areas could adapt themselves to conditions in the far north and make a living for themselves by hunting and trapping' (*Arctic Circular* 1955). DRD has since evolved, in 1954 becoming the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources (DNANR) and later DIAND.

In numerous DRD and RCMP reports and press releases, officials emphasized that the Inuit families being selected were volunteers. Two of DRD's relocation planners, James Cantley and Alex Stevenson, prepared a statement, entitled 'Movement of Natives' (Cantley 1953), describing the project for press publication:

If the results this year warrant it, other natives can be moved to these pioneer points and to other points selected later. For the present, however, this migration is being considered as an experiment to determine if Eskimos can be induced to live on the northern islands...All the Eskimos moved this past summer, did so voluntarily.

This interpretation was later to be heavily criticized by the Inuit involved. Anna Nungaq (1981), for example, explained, that the officials 'were actually looking for volunteers, and no one offered to go so therefore we had no choice. We had no idea of where we were going or why. We were very confused'.

The selection process

The government's planning for the relocation to Grise Fiord (initially referred to as Craig Harbour) began in

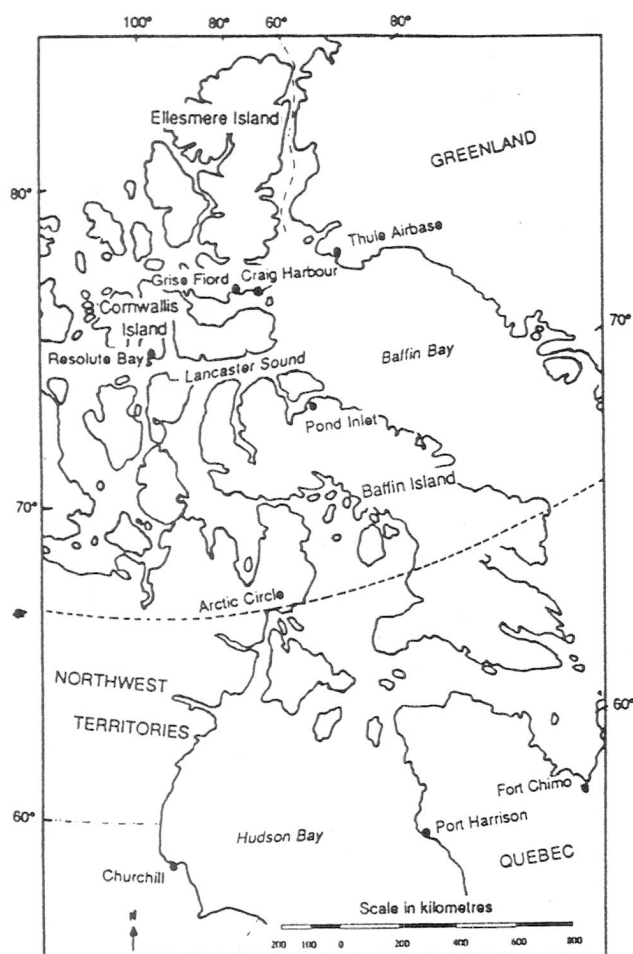


Fig. 1. Location map: northern Canada.

October 1952, and for Resolute Bay in December 1952. In March 1953 DRD's Deputy Minister Maj Gen Young wrote to RCMP Commissioner Nicholson requesting RCMP cooperation in selecting the Inuit relocatees (Young 1953a). RCMP Constable (Cst.) Ross Gibson was the officer later given the task of making the individual selections of Inuit at Port Harrison.

The Hickling report (1990: 54) makes the assumption that 'reasonable steps were taken by the Government officials to establish and apply suitable criteria for the selection of families'. Yet the method Gibson used in his selection process was at odds with that proposed by DRD's representative at Port Harrison, welfare teacher Margery Hinds. Hinds (1953a) reported that in her discussion with Cst. Gibson: 'I suggested that those who have proved themselves capable of living far from the trading post, and who get along without much help from the government or the HBC (Hudson's Bay Company) are more likely to prove successful folk to go north'. Hence, select the best hunters who have already proved themselves to be self-reliant. Gibson used the reverse criteria. The Hickling report (1990: 54) claims that the selection 'criteria were developed over a period of several years'. In fact, after consulting with the manager of the HBC post at Port Harrison, Cst. Gibson selected those families who in his

opinion had become most reliant on social benefits and supplies from the post, on the basis that 'these people were all welfare cases and were perhaps some of the poorest Eskimos in the Arctic' (Gibson 1990).

The 'welfare cases' include Sarah Amagoalik who was pregnant, Nellie Amagoalik a grandmother about 80 years old, and Anna Aqiatasuk who was disabled and could not walk. Some of the elders chosen were in their 50s, and there were a number of young children. A dossier the welfare teacher prepared on each relocatee, indicates that while some of those selected were not known as good hunters, they were excellent carvers (Hinds 1953b). However, they were not being sent north to carve; rather they were to become reformed hunters. Some RCMP officers described the relocation as a rehabilitation programme to 'encourage' the Inuit to become more self-reliant (Fryer 1954b). The DRD's stated policy for relocation to assist the Inuit, in effect obscured the true nature of the RCMP's selection criteria, to single out 'welfare cases'. From the outset of the operation, many of those Inuit selected were ill-suited for the more severe environment of the high Arctic, and areas with an absence of social services they had grown accustomed to.

Dividing up the families

The Hickling report (1990: 54) asserts that 'reasonable steps were made to explain the project' to the Inuit. It appears, however, that upon reaching Ellesmere Island after a six-week voyage aboard *C. D. Howe*, officials separated the Port Harrison families on the ship without prior warning into three groups: one for Craig Harbour (Grise Fiord), one for Resolute Bay, and a third for Alexandra Fiord, Ellesmere Island. Due to bad ice conditions the third group were prevented from reaching Alexandra Fiord, and were redistributed at Craig Harbour and Resolute Bay. The division of the families made a lasting impression on John Amagoalik:

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...We were dumped on the beach — and I mean literally dumped on the beach (Canada 1990).

Government documents and officials' statements support the Inuit contention that they were not told in advance of the segregation. While the Inuit were on board *C. D. Howe* in August 1953, RCAF Sqdn Ldr O'Neil asked DRD planner Cantley 'how many families would be going to each of the three settlement areas' (DRD 1953). Cantley replied 'that this would be decided on the boat taking the Eskimo to their destination. It was not desirable to break up family groups if possible' (*ibid.*). A final ship passengers' log prepared by the DRD lists the relocatees collectively under the three destinations. Cst. Gibson (1990), who selected the families for relocation, admitted that he:

... was not made aware of what was in the workings

until we got to Craig Harbour when Henry Larsen advised me of the decision to split the Eskimo people. Due to the time element I doubt that very much thought was given to the final outcome and how it would affect those people involved.

After landing at Craig Harbour the RCMP moved the Inuit to a location in Grise Fiord 65 km away.

Inuit separation

Relocation separated the Inuit families from their relations in Port Harrison. Removed from a collection of camps with close family ties, the families were placed in distant colonies from which they were unable to communicate with their relatives down south. Cst. Gibson was uneasy about the effect the lack of communication would have on the relocated families. As an expedient, he notified Supt. Larsen that he was going to try to arrange for 'the natives to speak over the radio to their people at Port Harrison, it is felt that this will keep the people more settled at this point' (Larsen 1953). Anna Nungaq (1981) insisted that 'I never heard from our relatives at all. I recall getting a letter after being there many years. There was no means of communication and therefore no contact with relatives'.

In the 1950s it would have been difficult for the families to return to Port Harrison either to visit or to live. Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay were supplied once a year by the government ship. 'It was a one-way ticket', said former Cst. Bob Pilot (personal communication, 1990). The *C. D. Howe* stopped at Port Harrison on the way north, but not on the return trip. Not only was it physically impractical for the families to find their way home, but it was also actively discouraged by the officials. 'When discussing moving back to Inukjuak with the police, they used to try to convince me not to go', said Samwillie Elijahsialuk (1986). In his report on a crucial meeting with the Inuit in 1956 in Resolute Bay and a discussion about returning to Port Harrison, DNANR's (formerly DRD's) J. C. Jackson (1956) recounted:

I pointed out that transportation difficulties might require that visits be for a year and that it would be expensive to transport a family there and back...I do not know what the agreement may have been when the move was first made, but aside from any definite promises, if there were any, I would be inclined to suggest that if any family goes back for a visit, the family should pay part or all of the transportation cost and be able to guarantee to be self supporting during the visit.

Yet senior DRD officials fully recognized their responsibility to return relocated Inuit if necessary. In reference to another relocation undertaken in 1953 from northern Ungava to Churchill, Manitoba, DRD Deputy Minister Hugh Young (1953b) informed C. M. Drury, Deputy Minister of National Defence: 'I agree that it would be the responsibility of the Department of Resources and Development to return to his original settlement any Eskimo who proved unsatisfactory or who did not wish to remain at Churchill'. In the case of Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay, the DRD did not abide by this policy.

Promise of return

To inform the public about its relocation plans for the second shipment of Inuit from Port Harrison in 1955 to Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay, DNANR issued an enthusiastic press release:

It will be moving day this summer for 35 Eskimos in Canada's Arctic. And they are moving further north.

The 'moving van' for the Eskimos will be the Arctic Patrol vessel *C. D. Howe*.

This is a purely voluntary migration, the continuation of a policy started two years ago by the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources...The programme has been an unqualified success, and the Eskimos have been enthusiastic about their new homes farther to the north. Although they are free to return if they wish, the response so far has been to urge their friends and relatives from the 'south' to join them (DNANR 1955).

The question of whether the Inuit were actually free to return home, and whether a promise was made to return them home within two years if they wished to do so, has featured prominently in the discussions the Inuit have held in recent years with the government regarding repatriation.

The Hickling report (1990: 55) addresses the question of when the Inuit first asked to return to Port Harrison for a visit; stating that 'the earliest example of such a request, that we could find, occurred around 1960'. Curiously, DRD planner Alex Stevenson (1977) remarked that there 'were rumours from time to time in the first seven years that there were some dissatisfied or were homesick but this was never confirmed nor were there any approaches on record having been made to officials of the Federal or Territorial Governments'. However, there is ample evidence that Inuit relocatees wanted to move back to Port Harrison early on. J. C. Jackson, officer-in-charge of the Eastern Arctic Patrol in 1956, informed his superiors at DNANR that he had held a meeting at Resolute Bay on 21 August with all of the Inuit men, Supt. Larsen, Cst. Gibson, and an interpreter. 'The question of returning to Port Harrison for a visit was raised', he wrote, and 'there seems to be some thought that this was in the original agreement' (Jackson 1956). In November 1956, RCMP Cst. Gibson at Resolute Bay reported that the Inuit 'from time to time express their desire to return to friends and relations at Port Harrison' (Gibson 1956). He sent this report to RCMP Commissioner Nicholson, and to DNANR's Director of Northern Administration, F. J. G. Cunningham.

In a memorandum to Cunningham in October 1956, the Chief of Arctic Division Ben Sivertz (1956) conceded that the Inuit 'only agreed to go in the first place on condition that we promise to return them to their former homes after 'two or three years'. DNANR planners in Ottawa knew of the Inuit's desire to return, and privately acknowledged the department's two-year promise of return, but ignored the Inuit requests.

'Their garden of Eden'

Differences of climate and resources

RCMP Cpl. Glenn Sargent (1954) informed his superiors

that for the Port Harrison newcomers 'Craig Harbour (Grise Fiord) and surrounding country is their GARDEN OF EDEN' (emphasis his). The Inuit have since countered that quite the opposite was the case. Climatic differences between Inukjuak (Port Harrison) and Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay are extreme. Inukjuak, in 58°27'N, is very much warmer and less severe than Resolute Bay in 74°42'N or Grise Fiord in 76°25'N; the two northern localities have no daylight from November to February. The planners did not foresee or were not unduly concerned with the physiological effects and hardship that long months of darkness might have on the families. Yet this was the first time that Inuit from the southern Arctic regions were going to be exposed to these extreme conditions.

DRD officials have said that the Inuit were told in advance what the conditions in the high Arctic were going to be like. The dark period and colder temperatures, though, clearly came as a shock: 'The first two or three years were terrible for us, especially the dark season,' said John Amagoalik (personal communication, 1988). Elijah Nutaraq (1989) affirmed that 'we couldn't get used to the never-ending darkness'. RCMP officers also found it difficult. Ross Gibson (1990) remarked that 'I found during the dark season it was quite depressing for me under such circumstances'. The Inuit have officially named Resolute Bay 'Qausuittuq', or 'place of darkness'.

Scavenging for food

Though the families were clearly unprepared for the drastic change in environment, that is not what the public were told. On the contrary, RCMP Cst. Fryer (1954b) published the statement that 'It would be difficult to find a group of Eskimos anywhere in the North that could claim to be as well off as the Grise Fiord camp ... Eskimo conditions could hardly be better.' The Hickling report (1990: 54) suggests that 'the difficulties of life in the high Arctic were recognized and explored beforehand by officials'; if so, the officials were negligent in their responsibilities to ensure that the Inuit did not suffer as a result of the relocation. For example, the Inuit had difficulty finding sources of drinking water; they also had to become accustomed to a change in diet, and learn new hunting skills adapted to the different ice, terrain, and dark period conditions. The Inuit were told by officials that there would be an abundance of game up north. Yet, the government had made no wildlife resource studies to support such statements (DRD 1953). In Inukjuak the Inuit hunted birds, eggs, fish, caribou, seal, walrus and whale. At Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay there were few birds or caribou or fish; instead the diet was restricted mainly to seals, walrus and polar bear.

Cst. Gibson (1955) recorded in one report: 'The native camp at Resolute Bay continues to survive'. In order to survive, the relocatees needed to hunt, regardless of the weather conditions. Yet many of those individuals selected were not known for being good hunters. John Amagoalik remembered 'being very excited when any military airplane arrived in Resolute, because we knew

that the people on those airplanes had box lunches, food. We used to rush to the dump five miles away in the middle of winter to go to the dump and get those boxes of half-finished sandwiches' (Canada 1990). Lizzie Amagoalik (1989) also recalled that:

... we were always hungry. We had to look through the white man's garbage for food for our children. We had to take clothes that had been thrown away for our children. When the policemen found out that we were living off their garbage, they got very angry at us and told us to stop. We asked, 'How are we going to eat?'

Supplementing their diet with left-overs from the white man's dump became a contentious issue with the RCMP and the DRD. Cst. Gibson (1954) reported that: 'Strict instructions were given the natives that they were not to carry away any articles found in the dump.' DNANR planner Ben Sivertz (1958) wrote to the Deputy Minister to warn him of the implications 'of the growing problem of Eskimos scrounging from garbage dumps':

... it is the sort of thing which can give rise to embarrassing publicity... We must not be put in the position of providing garbage as relief rations for Canadian citizens, which is exactly what is happening in some places.

This situation was still prevalent in 1964, when Cst. Lucko at Resolute Bay commented on the Inuit's means for finding building materials. They still needed to resort to 'what they obtained for themselves from the local dump' (Lucko 1964).

Finding shelter

Canadian newspapers accepted officials' statements and press releases on the relocation without critical assessment. The new colonies were apparently too far distant to dispatch a reporter, and no Inuit were interviewed. Despite stories such as a *Montreal Gazette* (1954) article which exclaimed 'New homes for Eskimos said success', housing remained a problem for the Inuit. In an inspection report, DRD official C. J. Marshall (1953) disclosed that many of the relocatees had tents which were in poor condition. In Inukjuak the Inuit were able to build igloos to move into by November, whereas in Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay they discovered that despite colder conditions the snow was not appropriate for making igloos until January. During the first winter, Cst. Gibson (1953) at Resolute Bay reported on 14 October 1953 that tents 'are still being occupied by the natives, but with low temperatures and drifting snow igloos will be built within the next few days'. Cpl. Sargent (1953) at Grise Fiord in his report on 31 December 1953 conceded that 'at present all families are living in tents due lack of suitable snow for snow houses'. The snow conditions surprised the officers and the cold caused hardship for the families.

Elijah Nutaraq (1989) confirmed that 'we had to live in tents all winter because there was not enough snow to build a snow house. I remember waking up every morning rolled up like a ball because it was so cold!' Ross Gibson (1983) admitted that 'the cold was something the Quebec Eskimos had never endured the like. I am sure they would have

all gone home right then if they could'. Even in 1959 when the RCMP submitted a low cost housing plan for Grise Fiord, Stevenson (1959) at DNANR was not supportive and advised that 'the existence is marginal here and it may be more practicable to use this settlement for experimental purposes'.

Lack of services

In 1953 there were a variety of facilities at Port Harrison and a lack of basic services available at Craig Harbour and Resolute Bay. At Port Harrison there had been a Hudson's Bay Company store since 1920, and a Revillon Frères trading store from 1913 to 1936. At Craig Harbour and Resolute Bay the RCMP set up a government store (in 1956 the store and RCMP detachment at Craig Harbour were moved to the Inuit settlement at Grise Fiord). Due to the colonies' isolation, though, the annual supply shipments for the new stores were greatly restricted, whereas Port Harrison was closer to southern supply sources. Port Harrison had an Anglican church since 1927, a nurse and medical station since 1947, a welfare teacher and a school since 1949. The new colonies had none of these services.

Health care was lacking during the early period of the relocation. Markoosie Patsauq was twelve years old at the time of the move, and his brother John Amagoalik was five. Both recall how sick Markoosie was before they boarded *C. D. Howe* in Port Harrison. 'I was spitting up blood', said Markoosie Patsauq (personal communication, 1988). Markoosie had tuberculosis, but his illness was not diagnosed. The Hickling report (1990: 54) asserts that the Inuit 'were X-rayed and medically examined beforehand'. However, the X-ray machine used routinely to check the Inuit was not on board the ship at the time medical staff examined the families at Port Harrison (Hinds 1953b). Within the first year of being at Resolute Bay, Markoosie's condition deteriorated to the point where he could no longer stand up and was confined to the tent. Despite the Inuit camp's proximity to the air base at Resolute, Markoosie was not evacuated until the summer of 1954 aboard *C. D. Howe*.

RCMP officers in charge of Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord were responsible for providing health care, but had limited knowledge as lay dispensers and equally limited resources. Grise Fiord's isolated location and severe winter weather made emergency airlifts difficult. In one emergency, for example, it took five days for a doctor to reach Grise Fiord by air (Sivertz 1960a). By the time the doctor arrived at the settlement, one child, Elisapee, had already died and six others were seriously ill.

In an effort to maintain its exclusive control over Grise Fiord, the RCMP attempted to block later efforts by the DNANR to provide professional health care to the Inuit. In 1964 Chief Supt C. B. Macdonell reaffirmed this position: 'I might say that the placing of a nurse at Grise Fiord would now negate the necessity of our having a detachment there at all' (Macdonell 1964). Macdonell ended with the proviso: 'Content of this memorandum is not to be passed along to anyone outside the Force for obvious reasons.'

Port Harrison and Pond Inlet group conflicts

The DRD included five Pond Inlet families in the relocation plans because they were more accustomed to conditions in the high Arctic, and according to the Hickling report (1990: 45) they agreed 'to transfer their hunting and trapping skills to the Inuit participants from Arctic Quebec'. The Hickling report fails to point out though that rather than the cooperation officials had hoped for, inter-group relations reflected 'indifference, ridicule and even hostility' (Freeman 1969).

The incompatibility of the two groups had lasting effects. At Resolute Bay Cst T. C. Jenkin warned in his report in December 1959: 'There is only one factor of morale that could develop to a serious situation here at Resolute Bay. That is the jealousy between the group from Port Harrison and the smaller number from Pond Inlet.' (Jenkin 1959). Cpl V. R. Vitt (1968) at Grise Fiord reported in December 1968 that the 'social division between the Port Harrison and Pond Inlet groups continues as strong as always and remains the greatest obstacle to the community morale'. The government created artificial Inuit communities without consideration to what the long-term social implications could be of placing two groups from different cultural backgrounds together in confined colonies.

Looking for Eve: trouble in 'paradise'

Despite Cpl Sargent's (1954) optimistic appraisal that Craig Harbour was the Inuit's Garden of Eden, finding marriage partners became a complication of the experiment. The relocated Inuit were groups of extended families, and intermarriage within a family group was not possible. Intermarriage with the socially-incompatible Pond Inlet group was also not viable. Thus the colonies' small populations limited the prospect of Inuit finding suitable spouses. This eventuality did not occur to the planners of the experiment, and no forethought was given to the effects of limiting the group's reproductive capacity. In his annual report for 1955 Cpl. Sargent (1955) at Grise Fiord noted that three young men had approached him in regard to wives. His recommendation was that one who was not considered a good provider should be discouraged, but that the other two be assisted in obtaining wives before they caused trouble. The experiment's defects were apparent when RCMP officers assumed the role of match-makers and marriage counsellors for the Inuit.

Supt. Larsen wrote to Commissioner Nicholson in September 1956 offering a solution to the problem of finding spouses. He suggested that a 'few young boys or girls might have to be added to the settlement from year to year as they become of marriageable age' (Larsen 1956). This solution might have worked had it not been for the reluctance of single girls to agree to be moved north for this purpose. Evidence of the tragic long-term social implications of the relocation experiment is revealed in an RCMP report from Grise Fiord (Vitt 1965), which stated that even by 1965 'there are not really sufficient of either sex in the same age group to allow much, if any, choice of a partner'.

Economic mismanagement

At the colonies, whites asked the Inuit, such as Simeonie Amagoalik, to be guides for their hunting parties in return for giving them meat from the hunt. John Amagoalik also recalled how his father 'and other relatives spent months at a time taking government surveyors around the high Arctic, mapping the islands and collecting mineral samples. And they were never paid for it' (Canada 1990).

Supt Larsen (1954) voiced his concerns about non-payment for Inuit wage-employment at Resolute Bay in a memo to DNANR's Director of Northern Administration, citing as an example a couple who each earned \$5.00 per day for employment with a geological survey party: 'I get the impression...[they] do not actually receive their wages either in cash or in goods from the Eskimo trading store but that the whole of their wages goes to your Department to help pay off the Eskimo Traders' Loan Account'. Similarly a Department of Transport (1954) receipt dated 23 April 1954 showed that four Inuit earned \$13.75 each and a fifth earned \$10 from wage-employment at Resolute Bay, but an attached Treasury Office receipt grouped the five wages together and made it out to the Eskimo Loan Fund (DRD 1954), not to the individuals themselves.

DRD had arranged for \$5000 loans from the Eskimo Loan Fund to be extended to the trading stores at Craig Harbour and Resolute Bay at the outset of the project. Supplies purchased by officials for the relocation, prior to leaving Port Harrison, were charged against these accounts, which would have to be repaid by the Inuit (Stevenson 1953). The RCMP became the traders at the two stores; they ordered the supplies and allocated them, kept the accounts, valued the furs, and shipped the furs south to be sold. The Inuit were not paid in cash, they received credit at the store. Proceeds from the Inuit's fur catch were used by DRD to pay off the two loans, and profits accrued.

The Hickling report makes no mention of the fact that the proceeds from the Inuit's fur catches were mismanaged by DNANR. In 1960, RCMP Asst Supt W. G. Fraser learned that during the previous trapping season, the Inuit at Grise Fiord received \$6140 in credits for 379 white fox pelts. He further learned that the fox pelts were sold at auction by DNANR for \$17,953. The balance of \$11,800 in profit never reached the Inuit hunters (Fraser 1960a). After receiving an explanation from Stevenson and Bolger at DNANR, Fraser (1960b) informed his Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay detachments that:

In the past, concern has been expressed because the profit from the annual operation of the Eskimo Trading Stores has not been returned to the Eskimos. We now understand that this cannot be done because of the unusual circumstances whereby the Trading Stores were established.

In addition, Bob Pilot (personal communication, 1990) recalled that 'someone in Ottawa, in their wisdom, was cutting back on our annual order of supplies for the Inuit'. Another point of controversy centred on the Inuit's mar-

ketable skill of stonecarving. Both the welfare teacher at Port Harrison, Margery Hinds (1953b), and Alex Stevenson (1953) commented on the fact that 'a number of natives to be moved are excellent stone carvers'. James Houston of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild successfully established a local handicrafts industry from soapstone carvings in Port Harrison in 1949. As a result, the community achieved a rapid growth in income from carvings in the early 1950s (Fig. 2).

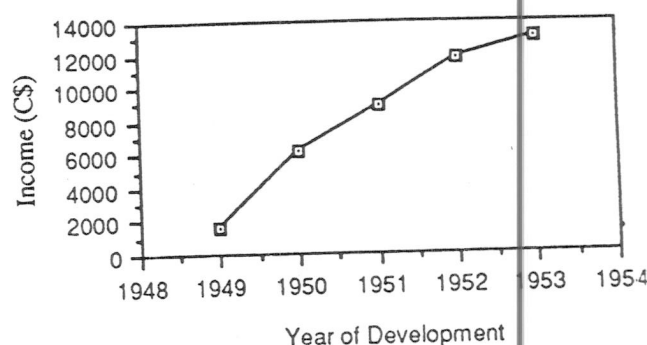


Fig. 2. Estimated earnings from Port Harrison handicrafts 1949-54. Source: Houston (1954).

However, in the 1953 relocation some of the best carvers were removed from Port Harrison and their new source of livelihood, without planners having assessed if soapstone would be available at the new colonies. That there was no soapstone at Grise Fiord or Resolute Bay became a source of discontent for the Inuit. RCMP officers ordered supplies from Port Harrison to be delivered on C. D. Howe's annual visit, though often the shipments did not arrive, or were of inferior quality. Although a profitable market developed for handicrafts, rugs and clothing at the Resolute Bay base, DNANR's C. J. Jackson (1956) reported that '[Cst] Gibson has been loath to encourage this activity too much as it could result in less hunting and prove a detriment'.

Containment

Unable to return to Port Harrison, some Inuit tried to move between Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord to join their relatives. The RCMP at times discouraged this practice. In 1959 one Inuit, with his wife and mother, asked to move from Grise Fiord to Resolute Bay to join his brother, who had gone to Resolute Bay in search of a wife. In his report, Cst Pilot (1959) at Grise Fiord recorded that he was 'against such a move as it is known that others from this area would like to live at Resolute also, and if one moves it is felt that more will follow'. Cst Jenkin (1960) at the Resolute Bay detachment, filed a report to headquarters warning that if some families were not successfully discouraged from moving to Resolute, 'in all probability three other families will also move with them'.

Isolated from their families and social groups and unable to return to Port Harrison, Inuit wrote to their relations asking them to move north to join them in the colonies. Without having assessed game resources in the Queen Elizabeth Islands, DNANR became concerned

after 1955 with overpopulating the region, and therefore restricted further Inuit relocation to the colonies. Cst Jenkin at Resolute Bay reported in 1960 that there were growing difficulties in enforcing this policy. He wrote that 'two other families have been corresponding with relatives from Port Harrison to have them settle at Resolute' (*ibid.*). The Inuit claim that some of their letters to relatives were destroyed. John Amagoalik remembered that 'to our horror we found that our letters were thrown in the dump' (Canada 1990). In order to dissuade the families at Resolute from writing to encourage relatives to come north, Cst Jenkin (1960) warned them that they 'would lose many of their present advantages such as free electricity, a fair amount of employment and good hunting and trapping'. Aided by the sheer distance from Port Harrison and the geographical isolation of the colonies, the RCMP and DNANR were effective for a number of years in their strategy of limiting immigration and keeping southern Inuit from joining their relations.

Mixed motives

The government's official reason for the relocation was to experiment with moving Inuit to areas more abundant in natural resources. Yet three other motives lay behind the moves, which the government did not state publicly — economic policy incentives, moral convictions, and sovereignty concerns.

The economic argument

In May 1952 the Canadian government organized a conference on Eskimo Affairs, its purpose to find solutions to 'the Eskimo Problem' of unstable economy, poor health, and growing welfare-dependency. The key problem with the Inuit economy, noted the officials, was that it was based on one leading commodity, the white fox fur. The decline in prices from \$25 a pelt in 1945 to \$3.50 in 1950 was accompanied by a post-war inflationary increase in the prices of store goods in the north (Wright 1953). Rather than using price supports, the government had responded by increasing the amount of 'relief' (welfare) payments to the Inuit. Expenditure on Inuit relief rose from \$14,000 in 1946-47 to \$112,000 in 1950-51. During 1950-51 the government also paid the Inuit \$250,000 in 'family allowances' (Diubaldo 1985: 109). All Canadian children became recipients of these social benefits under the Family Allowances Act of 1944.

The 1952 Conference on Eskimo Affairs identified northern Quebec as one of the most 'densely populated' and poorest Inuit regions in Canada (Eskimo Affairs 1952). According to a 1952 government statistical report, the Inuit registration district receiving the highest level of family allowances was District E9-Port Harrison, Quebec, which up to that time had received \$161,773 in benefits; it was followed by E5-Pond Inlet, NWT, with \$122,303, and E8-Fort Chimo, Quebec, with \$111,334 (Crozier 1952). Correspondingly E9, E5 and E8 districts, which received the highest levels of social benefits, were also targeted for

relocation experiments in 1953. Each experiment would have the effect of depopulating the districts by moving Inuit to sites elsewhere. Resolute Bay and Craig Harbour were not even in a registration district. Dismay over escalating relief benefits to E8 and E9 districts was summed up in a single notation by a senior DRD official in 1950: 'We are distributing altogether too much relief in these northern Quebec areas' (DRD 1950).

In a study of Port Harrison's average Inuit family income for 1951, 61.8% was derived from social benefits (31.2% from family allowances and 30.6% from government relief), whereas only 12.7% came from proceeds earned by fur trapping (Figure 3, DRD 1951). In the post-war market economy it was no longer feasible for the Inuit to subsist solely by living off the land. The DRD felt it was paying too much money to provide for the welfare needs of Inuit in districts such as Port Harrison. Thus there was an economic motive for finding a cost-savings solution to what was perceived as an economic problem — fur prices had sharply decreased and the provision of social benefits had greatly increased.

The moral argument

The Inuit from Port Harrison had attracted widespread interest before. In 1922 Robert Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North* was premiered in New York, London and Moscow. Such was the public's interest in the 'happy Eskimos' that ice creams were soon being sold as 'Nanuks' in Germany, 'Esquimaux' in France, and 'Eskimo Pies' in Britain and America. The documentary was filmed in the Port Harrison area. For whites, the Inuit depicted in the film represented the symbolic image of 'noble savages'. From a white perspective, it was the transformation of the Inuit from the noble savage of the 1920s to the welfare-dependent 'white man's burden' of the 1950s, that altered the government's essential relationship with the Inuit. By replacing its former policy of minimal social intervention with that of financial provider, the federal government in Ottawa was not responsible to the Inuit, it felt responsible for them. This gave Ottawa a prerogative to experiment with moving people in the hope that it might improve their lives. Ironically, Robert Flaherty's Inuit son, Joseph Flaherty, and his young family were relocated from Port Harrison to Grise Fiord in 1955.

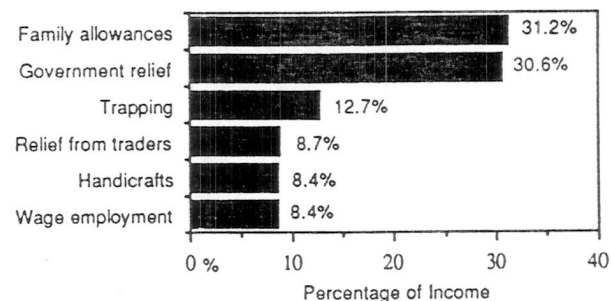


Fig. 3. Port Harrison's average Inuit family income. Source: DRD 1951.

Administrators were struggling with a fundamental moral dilemma related to the provision of relief benefits. Relief, it was argued, was destroying the Inuit's moral character and independence (Eskimo Affairs 1952). The government was not alone in criticizing the Inuit's way of life. Reporting on the outcome of the 1952 Conference on Eskimo Affairs, the *Toronto Globe and Mail* stated that 'knowing that there is always government aid to fall back on, the Eskimo in some parts of the north has lost a certain amount of his interest in hunting and fishing for a living' (Bain 1952). Based on these reports and others, an article in the *Wall Street Journal* in December 1952 attacked Canada's Inuit administration policy (McKenna 1952). 'The debut of the welfare state in the Arctic', it argued, 'meant they didn't have to hunt seals or catch fish anymore'. The government became committed to finding decisive solutions to 'the Eskimo problem'.

The official who first suggested a relocation to Ellesmere Island was RCMP Supt. Larsen (1952a) in a memo to Commissioner Nicholson in February 1952. Larsen (1952b) also advised the Commissioner that 'the average Canadian citizen has no conception of how the once healthful and resourceful Eskimo has been exploited to such a degree that he now lives a life comparable to that of a dog'. Supt. Larsen was a strong advocate for the RCMP becoming more active in Inuit administration. It could 'play a very important part in rehabilitating the Eskimos provided the proper policies are adopted' (*ibid.*). Larsen's view of police supervision in effect turned the new colonies into reformatory camps. Cst. Fryer (1954a) at Grise Fiord outlined the need for a rehabilitation programme by reporting that the 'first impression given to the members of this detachment by the Port Harrison natives, was that they were a depressed, lifeless group of individuals, who were looking for too many handouts from the white man'. The officers sought to rehabilitate the Inuit to live off the land, without aid from the government. Not all the Inuit could withstand the stringent regime at Grise Fiord. One relocatee, the carver Aqiatasuk, who wanted to return home, was also the RCMP-designated 'camp boss'. Aqiatasuk did not survive the first year, he died of a heart attack in July 1954.

The RCMP continued under Larsen's instructions which, according to Gibson (1990), were that 'above all else the Inuit should be kept in their native clothing and foot gear, and their diet of country food should be encouraged'. In August 1956 it was reported that Cst. Gibson 'tried to keep them wearing sealskin boots ... however, there is a demand for rubber boots, partly for the children in the spring' (Jackson 1956). Such were the conflicting attitudes between the RCMP and DNANR that J. C. Jackson advised that 'since these people have earned their own money, it would seem a delaying action is about all that can be done on such items as rubber boots and other items of civilized apparel' (*ibid.*). Jackson noted that much of the men's clothing were RCAF discards anyway.

In light of the RCMP's unofficial 'keep the Eskimo an Eskimo' policy at Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord, it is ironic

that Jean Lesage, Minister of DNANR, should avow in 1955 that 'the preservation of the Eskimo in his primitive state is not a real alternative...It would involve segregation and isolation ... [and] denial of the most humane services' (Lesage 1955). In this case, a social policy the government was presenting in public did not accord with how it was treating the Inuit in practice.

The sovereignty argument

A third possible reason for the relocation was related to Canadian sovereignty. The Inuit claim they were deceived by the government and that sovereignty was the main reason for their relocation. The government and its advisers will presently not concede that sovereignty was involved, and the matter is clearly controversial. The Hickling report (1990: 53) attests that 'the Canadian government had consistently displayed its sovereignty in that area for so long and in so many ways as to have firmly established its title to all of the Arctic Islands in a manner consistent with International Law'. However, asserting *effective occupation* over the Arctic Islands was a concern of the government throughout the 1950s, and there are documents which indicate that it was a contributing factor behind the relocation.

In a report on Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, Dean Vincent MacDonald (1950) advised that Canada's title to its Arctic territories should be asserted and maintained 'upon the ground of effective occupation alone as the chief and most satisfactory ground of reliance'.

The 'top secret' minutes of a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister St. Laurent on 19 January 1953 show that Mr. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, raised questions about US military activity in the Canadian Arctic (Canada 1953a). He pointed out that transient US officials both civil and military outnumbered Canadian transients during the summer months in the Arctic Archipelago, stating that 'everything pointed towards an increase in US activity in the Arctic in coming years'. The largest US project being planned was the establishment of the DEW line, a chain of 40 radar stations right across the Arctic. The USAF was also studying the possibility of constructing air strips on both Ellesmere Island and Baffin Island for landing by the heaviest freighter aircraft and jet fighters. Pearson (*ibid.*) took the position that:

If Canadian claims to territory in the Arctic rested on discovery and continuous occupation, Canadian claims to some relatively unexplored areas might be questioned in the future. He was concerned about the *de facto* exercise of US sovereignty, examples of which were numerous during the last war in other parts of Canada, and it seemed clear that an increase in US activity in the Arctic would present risks of misunderstandings, incidents and infringements on the exercise of Canadian sovereignty.

The Prime Minister in reply said that 'it was within the realm of the possible that in years to come US developments might be just about the only form of human activity in the vast wastelands of the Canadian Arctic. This was the problem which had to be met' (*ibid.*). The Inuit relocation

experiment, concurrently being planned, was not discussed in the meeting, but the related issues raised in this Cabinet session are illustrative of the degree of anxiety expressed at the highest level in government over the need for Canada to enhance its effective occupation of the Arctic Archipelago.

At an interdepartmental meeting with the RCAF on 10 August 1953 to discuss the relocation to Resolute Bay and Craig Harbour, Sivertz of DRD pointed out that 'the Canadian government is anxious to have Canadians occupying as much of the north as possible and it appeared that in many cases the Eskimo were the only people capable of doing this' (DRD 1953). By relocating Inuit families to the high Arctic archipelago, the government would establish communities there with the first permanent Canadian citizens. Regardless of whether the government was acting on other motives as well, this action did fulfil a Canadian *de facto* sovereignty role. RCMP officers at the communities performed a similar role, though unlike the Inuit relocatees, the police were transient personnel.

A few months after the relocation was completed, the Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that 'we must leave no doubt about our active occupation and exercise of our sovereignty in these northern lands right up to the pole' (Canada 1953b). Jean Lesage, Minister of DNANR, reaffirmed in a House of Commons' debate in May 1954 that 'we should do everything to assert our sovereignty in those Arctic islands' (Canada, 1954).

In November 1960 C. M. Bolger, DNANR's Administrator of the Arctic, completed a 'confidential' assessment report for his superior, Sivertz, on the relocation to Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord. Bolger (1960b) disclosed that although the Inuit at Grise Fiord did not have opportunities of employment like those at Resolute Bay, nevertheless 'this community also serves a distinctly useful purpose in confirming, in a tangible manner, Canada's sovereignty over this vast region of the Arctic'. Bolger reaffirmed that 'the occupation of these northern islands by Canada's first Arctic citizens only enhances our claims to sovereignty of these regions'. Sivertz (1960b) described the report as 'a very good review' of the situation.

One of the strongest indictments of the government's administration of Grise Fiord is to be found in a 'confidential' memo from Bolger to Stevenson in October 1960. Bolger (1960a) commented on a conversation he had with Sivertz about some of the problems they had experienced with Grise Fiord in respect of supply and medical services: Sivertz's own feeling was that while Grise Fiord 'should be continued for sovereignty purposes, it should not be duplicated at other isolated locations'. Thus while the government was aware of the hardships and health risks it was imposing on the Inuit families relocated to Grise Fiord, it was determined to keep the community functioning for political reasons.

Campaign for compensation

Since 1978 the northern Quebec Inuit organization,

Makivik, and the national organization Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (whose president John Amagoalik was a relocatee to Resolute Bay) have lobbied the government to investigate the relocation issue. As a direct result, the government finally offered in 1988 to move relocated families back to Inukjuak, to this end paying travel costs and the expenses for new housing in Inukjuak. Despite the lateness of this response to a long-standing promise made 35 years before, officials have been reluctant to negotiate further compensation.

After hearing the disturbing oral testimony presented by Inuit relocation survivors, the parliamentary standing committee on aboriginal affairs in June 1990 recommended: that the government acknowledge the role played by the Inuit relocated to the high Arctic in protection of Canadian sovereignty, asked the government to apologize for wrongdoing, and that recognition and consideration for further compensation should be made to the people of Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay 'for their service to Canada and for the wrongdoings inflicted upon them'. However, after receiving the Hickling report, the Minister for DIAND appears to have persuaded Parliament to accept the report's findings, and to dismiss the recommendations of the multi-party standing committee.

Summary

The Hickling report's (1990: 54) assessment that the government established the colonies 'to improve the living conditions of Inuit' requires a qualitative evaluation. Relocation was a difficult physical undertaking for the Inuit, moving the families from a familiar climate to a severe one, including sick children, a pregnant woman, a disabled person, and elderly people. Hardly consulted beforehand, it was unlikely that the Inuit could have conceived of the great distance to the new colonies, or the environmental hardships they would have to endure.

The Inuit did not request the relocation; officials found 'volunteers' to fill their quotas. Separation of families on board *C. D. Howe* was executed without advance consultation, and families were further separated from kin in Port Harrison. Small communities were created of closely related people who soon had difficulties searching for spouses. Though involved in the planning, DRD abdicated operational responsibility to the RCMP, allowing the relocatees to be placed in isolated colonies under the sole tutelage of police officers, without the moderating influence of permanently stationed DRD personnel or missionaries.

Officials chose individuals who had come to rely on alternative sources of income, withdrew those sources, and impelled people to become dependent for their survival on hunting and trapping off the land. In 1953 the Inuit in Port Harrison were not earning the majority of their income from the land. By relocating the Inuit, planners tried to 'turn back the clock', depriving people of their livelihood from carving by at times discouraging the practice or not ensuring sufficient supplies of soapstone.

Officials removed families from a ready source of health care, a school and other services in Port Harrison to locations where these amenities were lacking. The operation was underfunded: no houses were provided against the extreme cold and winds which the relocatees were unaccustomed to, and not enough supplementary food was available to them. At the outset they did not receive enough rifles, boats, or other necessities for hunting and living in the high Arctic. Moreover, the Inuit were charged for supplies necessary for an undertaking which was not of their making. During the first years at Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay the Inuit faced their greatest hardship, yet in some cases they were not credited properly for wages earned or from profits on their fur catches.

Conclusion

Although the Inuit experienced anguish and infringements of their human rights as a result of the experiment, the government saw the relocation as a great success. Numerous press reports and internal documents attest to this view. In fact, the Hickling report (1990: 6) suggests that the relocation project 'was conscientiously planned, was carried out in a reasonably effective manner and that the Inuit participated voluntarily'. Inuit endured deprivations in the new colonies, and others fell sick or died, but the families managed to survive and populations gradually increased, despite difficulties encountered in finding spouses. Theoretically, the experiment might have seemed viable: to assist people who lived off the land to move from a region which was allegedly poor in resources to one that was resource rich. Yet the basic plan was intrinsically flawed and numerous unforeseen problems developed from the execution of the project.

The Hickling report (1990: 57) makes the striking conclusion that 'to apologize for a wrongdoing it did not commit would constitute deception on the part of the Government and would imply that the project was a failure, when, in fact, it was a reasonably successful endeavour'. Were it not for the suffering that the Inuit experienced from the relocation, the planners of the experiment might simply be deemed ill-advised. However, the records show that in addition to the many socio-economic problems which arose from the relocation, the government did not honour a promise it made to return the relocatees home after two years. The Inuit families were sent north in unwitting obedience to a government wish for 'effective occupation'. It is a testament to the survivors' tenacity that today Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay remain the nation's northernmost communities of Canadian citizens.

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