

Those who were transported to the new location by the C.D. Howe Institute were x-rayed before their departure and appear to have been found free of serious infectious diseases. Some of the participants who were included were quite aged, and at least one was physically disabled, but their participation in the relocation project was not out of line with Inuit culture values nor with the realities of life in the Arctic in those years.

The difficulties of life in the high Arctic were recognized and explored beforehand by the officials, and a reasonable plan was articulated to ensure that those who were relocated were well supported by experienced RCMP officers who knew the family personally and who were knowledgeable in Inuit ways and language.

Experienced Inuit families from the most northern settlements at this time were approached to assist with the project. They agreed to do so and transfer their hunting and trapping skills to the Inuit participants from Quebec.

The first group of Inuit relocated were not as well equipped as they might have been, but apparently this was dealt with after their arrival.

Reasonable efforts seem to have been made to explain the project to both of the Inuit groups involved before their departure, and to communicate the fact that participation in it was voluntary.

It is more than likely that some of the Inuit could not completely envisage what conditions in the high Arctic would be like because these were things that were outside the range of personal experience at the time. While this is truly regrettable, it should not imply a deliberate attempt by government officials to deceive or to mislead the Inuit participants.

A number of the Inuit families in the project stated in letters written to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the period of 1956 to 1963 that game and fur were plentiful in the vicinity of both Resolute and Grise Fiord, and that hunger was not a problem. The frequency of letter-writing from Inuit at Resolute Bay dropped off considerably after 1963, and nearly completely after 1966 with the transfer of responsibility for most aspects of Inuit affairs to the Government of the Northwest Territories. It is not possible, therefore, to say whether game and fur continued to be plentiful after the letters stopped coming, but on the other hand there is no reason to believe otherwise.

The report goes on to state:

We believe the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development gave the Inuit an understanding that they would be returned to their original communities after one, two, or three years, if this was requested. There is no evidence to suggest that the department intended this undertaking to remain in force indefinitely.

Routine Proceedings

The files show that some of the Inuit families living in Resolute Bay wrote to Ottawa, asking to return to Port Harrison (Inukjuak) for a visit. The earliest example of such request that we—

—the Hickling team—

—could find, occurred around 1960.

The determination of the length of the proposed visits quite often required several exchanges of letters. On one occasion, in 1961, Ottawa responded to such proposals by seeming to suggest that those wishing to visit Port Harrison (Inukjuak) should collaborate in charting an aircraft for this purpose, at their own expense. The files would indicate that one group did this in 1962, but no further details are provided.

It is uncertain if there was an official policy on the matter at the time. Our speculation is that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development took this position because it considered the individuals involved to be economically self-sufficient. This was the practice followed with respect to Fort Chimo Inuit working at Churchill and wishing to visit their home community.

Early in the 1970s, however, the Government of the Northwest Territories arranged and paid for the transportation of several groups of Inuit from Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay to Port Harrison to visit relatives and to assess whether they wish to be returned to that community on a permanent basis.

Several families subsequently requested relocation and this was done. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development reimbursed the territorial government for the costs of both the visits and the relocation.

On one occasion the RCMP used their own aircraft to permit several families living at Grise Fiord to visit relatives in Fort Harrison (Inukjuak), and subsequently relocated them. The RCMP apparently absorbed these costs.

An additional number of Inuit families living at Resolute Bay were relocated to Port Harrison (Inukjuak) in 1988, initially at their own expense or with assistance from the Makivik Corporation of Quebec. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development agreed to reimburse the transportation costs for those families who had already moved back to Inukjuak. This offer was subsequently extended to include the cost of transporting a number of other families who had not yet moved but who had indicated that they intended to do so.

These reimbursements, totalling approximately \$250,000, were paid out of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's 1988-89 appropriations. In 1988, the department also undertook to provide the government of Quebec with funds, amounting to approximately \$700,000, to permit Quebec to add ten houses to the pool of housing identified for Port Harrison (Inukjuak), in recognition of the impact that this inflow of people would have on the 1989 housing plans for that community.

The evidence that we examined does not support the allegation that the government committed wrongdoing in the planning and conduct of this project. The material we examined leads us to a different conclusion, namely that the project was conscientiously planned, that it was carried out in as reasonably effective manner and that the Inuit participated in it voluntarily, in their own search for a better life, and that they benefited from the experience.