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**Investigating the Inuit-Canadian Government Relationship. Claiming about the Fate of  
Inuit Dogs and Inuit Leadership**

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**Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

As they moved from camps to settlements in the late 1950s, early 1960s, Inuit brought their dogs with them. Because they left them untied so they could socialize and feed themselves, there were a great many roaming dogs in the settlements. Canadian, territorial, provincial and local authorities were concerned that those loose dogs could spread diseases and represent a threat for the inhabitants of the settlements. For this reason, using provisions from the Dog Ordinance in the North West Territories and the Agricultural Abuse Act in the province of Quebec, the authorities forced the Inuit to tie up their dogs. Many never did and policemen from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) or the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) were ordered to kill any dogs they thought represented a threat. At the same moment, important epidemics of dog diseases struck in many localities and many dogs died. For all of these reasons, the number of dogs was reduced significantly and by the end of the 1960s, Inuit dogs had all but disappeared from Arctic localities.

Since 1999, two Inuit organisations – the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) and Makivik Corporation – have been trying to understand what happened to the dogs of the Inuit. After hearing what Inuit elders had to say, they came to the conclusion that the dogs were killed on purpose in order to facilitate the imposition of a new way of life based on Canadian values upon them. They then decided to demand justice for what they perceived to be a wrong done to their people.

The focus of this paper is the dog claims, that is the actions undertaken by the QIA and Makivik to obtain justice regarding the fate of their dogs since 1999. It is not about the fate of Inuit dogs; this was discussed elsewhere (Lévesque 2005, 2008, 2010ab; Qikiqtani Truth Commission 2010ab). Its objectives are to describe the claiming process, illustrate the leadership demonstrated by Inuit organisations during the said process and try to understand why Inuit organizations have

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yet to be able to convince the Federal and Provincial governments of the importance and meaning of the dog claims for them and their constituents.

### **Inuit Claiming Tradition**

Before moving on, it is noteworthy to mention that the dog claims are part of a broader claiming tradition developed by Inuit leaders over the last decades to deal with governmental officials, demand justice and claim about their own rights. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many young Inuit started using the tools that were taught to them in boarding schools in Yellowknife, Churchill and Chesterfield Inlet, to organize their voice and defend their rights. Many of those young Inuit joined the Indian and Eskimo Association in the late 1960s, and then, in 1971, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (now Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami – ITK) founded by Tagak Curley.

Through the ITC, and later through regional organizations like the Baffin Regional Inuit Association – that would later become the QIA, and the Northern Quebec Inuit Association, which would become Makivik Society, and others, Inuit claimed their own rights. This would lead to:

- The recognition by courts of their aboriginal rights to the land (following the Malouf in 1973 and Baker Lake in 1979);
- Four different land claims (James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, Inuvialuit Land Claims Agreement, Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the Nunatsiavut Land Claims Agreement);
- Different forms of political recognition (whether through public or ethnic governments).

Apart from their political achievements, these Inuit organizations also tried to obtain justice for past wrongs like, most notably, the High Arctic relocations and residential schools abuses.

Those claims, whether they were political, economical or trying to restore justice, all shared similarities. In all of them, the same basic strategies were used (Kusugak 2000, Amagoalik 2007, Quassa 2008).

- 1) Inuit never confront governmental officials. For example, when they negotiated Nunavut, They never threatened to quit Canada, but were rather claiming that a successful negotiation would make them Canadians first.
- 2) They negotiate using the premises of their opponents without actually losing sight of their own objectives. For example, when being told they could not negotiate the creation of a political territory during the Nunavut Land Claims negotiations, the Inuit did as told and did not try to include the creation of the future territory (Nunavut) in the discussions. It is only after the agreement-in-principle was signed in 1991 that the subject of a territory was brought back to the table. Ultimately, their patience paid since they were able to obtain what they were looking for in the first place: a land claims agreement and a

political territory they could call home.

- 3) They are patient and are not afraid to repeat over and over again what their objectives are.
- 4) They take advantage of the national and international context to push their own demands (i.e. the Oka crisis, the Meech Accord, Alaska and Greenland territorial and political agreements, etc.)

The overall strategy of the Inuit is to work slowly, to avoid confrontation and to try to convince the opposing party of the importance of their own demands. They are patient.

So far, this strategy has worked well: Inuit were able to convince the Federal, territorial and provincial authorities of the importance of their claims and have obtained justice for residential schools and high Arctic relocations. So far, one of their only unsuccessful claims has been related to the fate of Inuit dogs in the 1950s and 1960s. For some reasons, they were never able to convince the governmental officials of the importance and seriousness of this claim.

### **Claiming about the dogs**

The genesis of the dog claims took place in 1999 when Pita Aatami, president of Makivik Corporation, heard Inuit elders say that the RCMP and the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) had killed their dogs in the 1950s and 1960s. He wanted to know more about these events, so he decided to “do an intensive documenting of people's stories about the dog slaughter” (Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development 2005a). Makivik decided to investigate the circumstances surrounding the slaughter of Inuit dogs in order to obtain an apology and compensations for Nunavimmiut. Makivik spent the remainder of the year making research in public archives (Library and Archives Canada and Hudson’s Bay Company) and interviewing 150 elders from all over Nunavik (AANO 2005a).

Pauloosie Keeyootak, then-President of QIA, argued the same year that the Inuit of Baffin Island had also lost their dogs. The QIA thus decided to call for the setting up an inquiry on the circumstances surrounding the fate of dogs. When asked why the QIA was not focussing on other alleged mistreatments suffered by Inuit (like residential schools or the way the tuberculosis epidemics were managed), Keeyootak answered that even though “There's been some cases where there have been other wrongs done to the Inuit, [...] the slaughtering of dogs is more universal and that's what we want to start with” (McCluskey 1999). He added that the dogs were killed on purpose because “it was mainly when people came in from outlying camps that their dogs were being killed so they didn't have a means of returning to their camp. Even when they just came in for supplies to the community, they killed off the dogs to prevent the family from

returning to the outpost camp” (McCluskey 1999).

In March of 1999, the RCMP detachment in Iqaluit had organized a conference meant to build bridges with the Inuit of Iqaluit (Tibbetts 1999). More than 50 showed up. Some of them seized the opportunity to tell the RCMP about how bad they felt when their dogs were killed 30-40 years earlier. The RCMP organizers – Corporal Glen Siegersma and Chief Officer Chris Bothe – just had no idea of what these people were talking about but nevertheless resolved “to have an apology ready in the next few months”<sup>2</sup>.

In March 2000, QIA and Makivik sent a joint letter to Robert Nault, then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and to Guy Chevrette, then Minister for Native Affairs in Quebec. In this letter, the organizations claimed that:

During the period 1950-1975 both Canada and Québec undertook through their respective officials and police forces, a systematic program of killing sled dogs throughout Nunavik and the Baffin Region of Nunavut. (Aatami and Keeyootak 2000)

Both presidents also accused the federal government of having destroyed documents that could have proven the existence of a policy aimed at killing dogs systematically and of concealing documents that proved it was aware of the importance of dogs for the Inuit culture at the time. They demanded that the governments of Canada and Quebec set up an inquiry, the parameters of which would be defined by both organisations and paid for with public funds.

Several months later, Lawrence MacAuley – then-Sollicitor General of Canada – wrote to both organizations that “to date, no evidence has been found in any remaining RCMP records to support your allegation regarding a government-sanctioned dog-killing policy” (MacAuley 2000). However, he acknowledged that some dogs were killed occasionally when they were sick, dangerous, or when their owners were neglecting them. On the other hand, he added that these isolated killings took place “at the request of local governments and community residents”. He finished by claiming that whenever a “RCMP member destroyed an animal, this was done in the interest of public safety, when the animal was deemed to be dangerous or posed a threat to individuals.”

Needless to say, neither organisation was satisfied with this answer. For the next several months, they both continued to ask the Federal government to set up an inquiry to probe the issue but the Federal Government did not think necessary to provide an answer beyond that given by

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<sup>2</sup> In the RCMP jargon, this episode is called “The Bothe Apology”. In 2006, the RCMP strongly criticized the attitude of Bothe who promised an apology while he was not aware of all the details and the implications of this issue (RCMP 2006).

MacAuley. Despite their efforts and desires, the Inuit voice was not heard.

In 2002 Guy St-Julien, Federal MP for Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, reminded the House of Commons in Ottawa that the Inuit were still “calling upon the Government of Canada to investigate the circumstances surrounding the extermination of all of the dogs in Nouveau-Québec between 1950 and 1975, and [that they demanded] explanations, apologies and compensation for the Nunavimmiut.” He also asked the government if one of its agencies had ordered the killing of dogs, adopted a policy supporting it and promoted it directly (Order Paper and Notice Paper, N° 177, 26 April 2002).<sup>3</sup>

St-Julien also wrote to Solicitor General of Canada MacAuley requesting information regarding the policy on dog slaughter between 1950 and 1975 (St-Julien 2002a). To all intents and purposes, MacAuley’s answer was similar to the one he had given to Makivik Corporation and QIA two years earlier (MacAuley 2002a). Furthermore, St-Julien tabled a petition signed by Nunavik Inuit that demanded that the Federal government shed light on the dog slaughter policy in Nunavik (St-Julien 2002b). In response to this petition, MacAuley provided yet again the same answer he had already repeatedly given to St-Julien and to Inuit organisations (MacAuley 2002b).

Despite St-Julien’s efforts, neither the federal nor the provincial governments investigated the circumstances surrounding the killings of Inuit dogs or offered apologies and compensations. However, in the North, reactions to his implication were generally favourable (Anonymous 2002; George 2002). The *Nunatsiaq News* even seized the opportunity to support the Inuit and asked for research based on Inuit oral history to shed light on the issue (Bell 2002). The same newspaper also published testimonies of Inuit elders retelling how they were affected when their dogs were shot by policemen (Arnatsiaq 2002ab, Anilniliak 2002).

In the South however, some newspapers criticized Inuit organizations. For example, the editor of the Vancouver paper *The Province* (Anonymous [Editorial] 2002) stated that even though the mistakes of the past should be repaired, all of them could not be, especially when they dealt with something as trivial as the death of dogs that became useless after the introduction of the snowmobile. The editor even asked the Inuit and Guy St-Julien to stop complaining and focus on causes more important for the Inuit. Another added that the disappearance of Inuit dogs was never caused by a policy of extermination set up by the Canadian government, but rather by the lost of

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<sup>3</sup> The position of St-Julien was quite delicate. It should be remembered that he was a Liberal MP, which means that he was actually part the party that was in power at the time. Through his interventions in the House, St-Julien was thus asking his own colleagues member of the same political formation to provide explanations for events that fifteen months earlier the Solicitor General of Canada, who was himself a member of the same Liberal caucus, had stated never took place.

interest of Inuit when they realized that the snowmobile was a more efficient and less demanding way of hunting and travelling (Purdy 2002).

By 2003 and 2004, Makivik and QIA stopped lobbying the Federal and Quebec governments about the fate of the Inuit dogs. Instead, both organizations decided to go back to the drawing board and rework their strategies. For the first time, both organizations took different paths.

On the one hand, QIA decided to pursue its investigations and to broaden its focus. They created the Dog Slaughter/Relocation Committee which was charged not only at looking “into the circumstances surrounding the destruction of husky dogs”, but also “into the circumstances surrounding relocation of Inuit by the Federal Government in the Baffin Region in the 1950’s.”<sup>4</sup> Terry Audla, executive director of the QIA, explained that when the QIA realized that the killing of dogs and relocation policies were part of a global policy of assimilation imposed on the Arctic by the Federal government, the organization started to focus not only on what happened to the dogs, but on the context in which the dog killing was made possible. And that context, the organization thought, also made possible other wrongs, like the relocations (Audla, personal communication).

On the other hand, Makivik decided to release the result of their own research. This took the form of a film titled *Echo of the Last Howl* (Makivik Corporation 2005c) and of a 26-page brief that was submitted to the Federal and Provincial governments in 2005 (Makivik Corporation 2005b). Targeted at the media, this strategy was highly efficient as it publicized the issue and forced several politicians to take position and act.

*Echo of the Last Howl* was first screened in Kuujuaq on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2005. Journalists (all expenses paid), politicians (i.e. Gilles Duceppe) and delegates from other Inuit organizations (QIA, CCI) were in attendance. The invitation to the film read:

The Inuit aim is to gain apology and compensation. The loss of whole dogteams affected the owners of the dogs, removing from them the ability to leave on a hunting trip when they wished, a loss of control. A way of life was destroyed. A form of genocide was exercised right here in Canada. (Makivik Corporation 2005a).

The language was strong.<sup>5</sup> The plot of the film as well. Using many Inuit testimonies as well as

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<sup>4</sup> Formerly available at the following address ([www.qikiqtani.nu.ca/english/board-dog-relocation.html](http://www.qikiqtani.nu.ca/english/board-dog-relocation.html)), this document is no longer available on the new QIA website ([www.qia.com](http://www.qia.com)). Those quotes were retrieved in 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Lisa Koperqualuk, who was Communication Officer for Makivik in 2005, said later that this press release was written by a communication firm based out of Montreal who was not knowledgeable of the issue and

fictional scenes where policemen shoot dogs and Inuit weep, the film leaves no room for nuances. Its intent is to make clear that dogs were parts of the Inuit traditional culture and that the Canadian government had a policy to systematically kill them between 1950 and 1975.

The 26-page brief was also released on January 19<sup>th</sup>. In this document (Makivik Corporation 2005b), Makivik accuses the Federal and Quebec governments of having set up sanitary measures based on the erroneous idea that Nunavik communities were faced with health and public safety issues because there were too many dogs. These measures led to the introduction of the *Qimmik killing policy*, which in turn led to a series of dog slaughters conducted by the RCMP and the SQ. Makivik also reiterated the need for an independent inquiry paid by the Federal government.

Interestingly enough however, both the brief and the film remain quiet about the various epidemics of rabies, distemper and infectious canine hepatitis that decimated hundreds of dogs all over the Canadian Arctic during the 1950s and 1960s. And yet, these epidemics are well documented (Benoit 1994: 28; Wenzel 1991: 115; MacRury 1991: 29; Choquette and Moynihan 1964: 264; Damas 2002: 142-145; Shannon 1997: 30; Graburn 1963: 13, 1969: 44).

Following the screening of the film and the release of the brief, the media got interested once again in the matter (Fortier 2005; Anonymous 2005; George 2005ab). In many ways, it can be argued that Makivik obtained exactly what it was seeking: coverage in the Canadian media and increasing awareness among MPs from political parties forming the opposition in the House of Commons.

Several weeks later, in March of 2005, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development of the House of Commons in Ottawa (the Committee) decided to hear testimonies about the alleged dog killings (AANO 2005ab). During two days, the Committee heard from:

- Four Inuit elders from Nunavik and Baffin Island;
- Pita Aatami, president of Makivik Corporation;
- Late Thomas Alikatuktuk, President of QIA;
- as well as Kevin Vickers from the RCMP.

The sessions were chaired by Liberal MP for Nunavut Nancy Karetak-Lindell. For the first time, representatives from the Parliament of Canada could directly question the Inuit about the issue dogs.

For the first time as well, the RCMP was officially taking a stance on the issue. In his address,

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whose sole aim was to make a strong statement that would convince as many people as possible to come to the film screening (Koperqualuk, personal communication).

Vickers contradicted the accusations made by the Inuit organisations and stated that the RCMP never enforced a policy meant to systematically slaughter Inuit dogs and that arbitrary episodes of slaughter never took place. He stated that the RCMP did kill some dogs, but only when they were sick or constituted a real hazard for the inhabitants of the communities. Vickers also seized the opportunity to point out the fact that the RCMP vaccinated hundreds of dogs, that it even gave some food to the Inuit so they could feed their dogs and that it even occasionally gave them healthy dogs. Vickers added that the elders who recount these horrifying stories nowadays were very young at the time and that they probably remember much more the pain experienced by their families than the events as such (AANO 2005a).

After two days of session and several hours of discussion about the reliability of long-term memory and the existence of “smoking gun” documents that would prove the existence of a dog killing policy, the committee finally passed a motion asking the Canadian government to appoint, by April 15<sup>th</sup> of that year, a Superior Court Judge to probe the issue (AANO 2005c).<sup>6</sup>

After a two month delay and many political and procedural quarrels, the motion was finally adopted by the House of Commons on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2005 (Debates of the House of Commons on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 8 June 2005; see also Younger-Lewis 2005b). However, that motion not being binding, the Canadian government had no obligation to appoint a judge or even set up an inquiry. When the House was dissolved in December 2005, the government still had not appointed anybody. After the January 2006 elections brought in a minority Conservative government, this motion sank into oblivion and the idea of appointing an independent judge to conduct the inquiry about the fate of the Inuit dogs during the 1950s and the 1960s was abandoned.

However, the work of the Committee encouraged Former Deputy Prime-Minister Anne McLellan to request that the RCMP conduct its own internal inquiry (Younger-Lewis 2005a).<sup>7</sup> Inuit organisations were deeply offended. Pita Aatami, President of Makivik said that “Any police force investigating itself cannot be regarded as doing a proper investigation” (Aatami 2005). Late

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the motion was passed by six to four and all opponents were members of the Liberal Party (Younger-Lewis 2005c). Nancy Karetak-Lindell abstained. Nevertheless, it seems the Inuit were heard and would finally get the investigation they had long asked for.

<sup>7</sup> Prior to the beginning of the inquiry, the RCMP already knew the conclusions it would reach. Indeed, according to Paul Young, Insp. of the V Division (based in Iqaluit), “our research as an organization has not shown any government-sanctioned cull of dogs sled dogs [...]. Never has it been a policy of the RCMP to have such a cull of sled dogs. [...] yes there was some killing of sled dogs by RCMP members but in each and every case it involved disease or the protection of the community, mostly based around the health, the welfare of the dog population and also the health and the welfare of the community” (CBC News 2005a).



president of the QIA, Thomas Alikatuktuk, also claimed his dismay and added that “[d]irections from Ottawa came into the Arctic telling RCMP what to do [...]. Personally, it's the administrators I'd like to see be investigated” (CBC News 2005b).

In October 2005, the RCMP released a provisional report (RCMP 2005) which stated that “[t]he preliminary findings of the review team is that there is no evidence of an organized mass slaughter of Inuit sled dogs by RCMP members in Nunavik and Nunavut between 1950 and 1970, which is alleged to have been carried out at the direction of the government, or on the RCMP's own initiative” (RCMP 2005). The provisional report gave rise to numerous reactions from Inuit organizations. Among them, that of Terry Audla of QIA who claimed that “[i]t'd be a sad day when I have to depend on the RCMP for my history. I have my elders for that” (Thompson 2005).

The RCMP final report was tabled at the House of Commons by Minister of Public Affairs Stockwell Day in November of 2006 (Debates (Hansard), November 29, 2006; see RCMP 2006b for the report itself). In this report, based on a 771-page internal report (RCMP 2006a), the RCMP claims, again that it “did not uncover any evidence to support the allegations, within the large volume of information collected, of an organized mass slaughter of Inuit sled dogs by RCMP members in Nunavik and Nunavut between 1950 and 1970, carried out at the direction of the Government, or on the RCMP's own initiative” (RCMP 2006b: 23). According to this report, the important decline in the dog population during the sixties could be explained by the prevalence of serious dog diseases, by the collapse of the fur trade, and by the migration of Inuit to settlements. The report concludes that it is time to stop looking for a culprit and to “explore the possibility of some form of dialogue with the Inuit community aimed at reconciling any differences the alleged sled dog issue may have highlighted and strengthening the relationship with a community whom the RCMP is proud to serve” (RCMP 2006b: 23-24).

The Inuit organisations swiftly reacted. Makivik and QIA produced a press release in which they stated that the RCMP report was “biased, flawed and incomplete” (Makivik Corporation and Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2006). Both organisations agreed of the urgent need for reconciliation between the Inuit and the Canadian government (Weber 2006). However, Pita Aatami stated that this report not only did not reconcile the Inuit and the Canadian government but “worsen[ed] the cultural divide and bitterness caused by the killing of the Inuit sled dogs” (Makivik Corporation and Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2006).

### **Making Sense of the Lack of Success**

By 2006, after the Conservative Party came in power in Ottawa and the RCMP released the result of its own enquiry, the QIA and Makivik knew that the Federal Government would not name a judge or pay for an inquiry that would probe the fate of Inuit dogs in Eastern Arctic communities in the 1950s and 1960s. Somehow, both Inuit organizations had not been able to convince the Federal government of the importance and meaning of this claims for them and their constituents.

Yet, they had been using some of the principles of the “Inuit Claiming Strategy” highlighted earlier:

- 1) They had tried, most of the time, to avoid conflicts. It is true that, especially at the beginning of the claiming process in 1999 and 2000, they had used strong language by accusing the Federal government of having had a dog killing policy or of having killed dogs on purpose to prevent Inuit to go back to their camps. However, rather quickly, both organizations started to focus on their own interpretation of the events and on the need for an inquiry rather than accusing the Federal government of having killed their dogs on purpose.
- 2) They had voiced their claim in a language that was understandable by the Federal, territorial and provincial governments. They wrote official letters and submitted a brief written using legal terminology. They had also made use of the media by giving material to newspapers, going to radio broadcasts, initiating actions that brought the attention of newscasts, by creating a film screened during a public event and by accepting the help offered by Guy St-Julien who could bring their claims to the House of Commons in Ottawa.
- 3) They had shown respect to the opposing party.
- 4) They had repeated over and over again their claims and its importance for them as well as their desire to have an inquiry into the matter.

All in all, they had worked slowly, had tried to avoid confrontation as much as they could and tried to convince Federal authorities about the importance of this issue for them. They did their job. But it did not work.

The question then is why were they not able to convince the federal, territorial and provincial governments?

The first reason is that despite having used virtually the same successful strategy they had been using for decades, the argument of both Inuit organisations was not understandable by the RCMP as well as the federal, territorial and provincial governments because it was based on sources that no one beside them (and the odd anthropologist) was ready give credit to. Most of the QIA and Makivik claims and argumentation were based on Inuit oral testimonies, which in turn relied on

long term memory. In the western legal context, arguments and claims are usually built around archival documents and experts' opinions. During other claims, Inuit had built their argumentation using the opinions of experts (i.e. Inuit Land Use Occupancy Project, Freeman 1976) and had used archival documentation extensively (i.e. relocation in the High Arctic, Marcus 1992, 1995), but not this time. All they could rely on was the testimonies of Inuit who had witnessed what took place. And those testimonies went against those of other witnesses, the policemen and civil servants working in the North at the time. They were also contradicted by the data found in public archives throughout the country.

The second reason is that they spoke about the killing of dogs in terms that made no sense to the RCMP and to the governments involved in the affair. None could understand why those killings were perceived as “genocides” or vector of cultural loss. To the governments, dogs were mere transportation devices that were replaced by the snowmobile, and that was the end of it. Actually, some even believed Inuit were better off without dogs since they required a lot of maintenance and were dangerous for everybody in the community (RCMP 2005). Inuit had never taken the time to explain the economic and symbolic importance of dogs in their own culture (i.e. that they are animal members of their society) (Laugrand and Oosten 2002; Lévesque 2008, 2010a). Had they done so, it is plausible to think the RCMP and the government would have understood the pain Inuit felt when some of their dogs were killed and stopped saying this claim had no grounds.

### **Inuit Leadership: The Makivik and Qikiqtani Truth Commission Inquiries**

By 2007, both Makivik and the QIA saw the shortcomings of their claiming strategy. By then, they had both decided to make their own inquiry into the matter.

In November of 2007, Makivik and the Quebec minister responsible of Indian Affairs Benoît Pelletier asked Jean-Jacques Croteau, retired justice of the Superior Court, to look into the Inuit allegations of dog slaughters. Both parties wanted to have “a description of the condition of Sled Dogs and their use by the Inuits and the relationship of the Inuit population with dogs in the 1950s and 1960s” (Croteau 2010: 3). They also wanted to know what reasons the authorities might have had to kill dogs and the manners in which the killings were carried out. To accomplish his task, retired Justice Croteau visited 14 Nunavik communities and heard 179 testimonies. Although he did not make archival research, he relied on documents given to him by Makivik (interviews, brief, archival documents, etc.).

In March of 2010, he presented his final report in which he claimed, among other things, that there never was a policy of slaughtering the dogs. However, he acknowledged that the Quebec

government acted out of ignorance toward the culture of the Inuit when their representatives (often SQ policemen) killed dogs because they supposedly represented a threat to local populations. This put the life of Inuit at risk, especially when they had nothing to replace dogs with, thus preventing them from travelling and hunting. Justice Croteau added that the Federal government did not act in accordance to its legal fiduciary obligations because they did not try to stop the actions committed by the Quebec representatives. Because of this, Justice Croteau thinks both governments owe compensations to Nunavik Inuit, which should be paid to organizations “whose objectives are to:

- organize sled dog races (*Ivakkak*) in Nunavik;
- promote the sale and distribution of Inuit art and sculpture;
- promote the teaching and use of Inuktitut and syllabics in Nunavik.” (Croteau 2010: 138)

In the fall of 2006, QIA decided to establish its own truth commission to look and investigate all possible transgressions that took place in the 1950s and 1960s, among which the dog slaughters. Building on initiatives already established during previous years, the QIA refused to limit its investigation to the fate of Inuit dogs. In 2007, the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC) was officially launched and retired judge Jim Iglorte was named president. The QTC’s mandate was to “to create an accurate history of decisions and events that affected Inuit living in the Baffin Region between 1950 and 1975, and to document their impacts on Inuit life.” (QTC 2010a).

For three years, the QTC visited every community of the Qikiqtaaluk region, often more than once. This allowed the Commission to amass 350 interviews with Inuit and Qallunaat alike. With the help from Ottawa consultants, the QTC also made extensive research into public archives which led to the creation of a comprehensive database comprising thousands of archival documents, transcription of testimonies, etc.

In October of 2010, the QTC released its final report (QTC 2010b) which concludes that when talking about the 1950- and 1960- Arctic, there are no clear villains and victims. While the Federal government was trying to establish in the North a society similar to that of the South – the way to do this obviously was by trying to assimilate the Inuit by imposing on them the same policies and programs available to other Canadians – this also represented a period of increased opportunities for many Inuit.

Yet, the QTC recommends, among other things, that the Government of Canada acknowledge that many of its decisions taken in the 1950s and 1960s led to hardship and had negative outcomes for the Inuit. As far as the Inuit dogs are concerned, the QTC concludes that while it is

true that many dogs “died from disease or were abandoned by their owners, hundreds were shot by RCMP and other settlement authorities because Qallunaat were afraid of loose dogs.” (QTC 2010a: 4). This had a terrible impact on many Inuit who suffered because they became dependant on welfare and store-bought food.

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With these investigations, both Makivik and the QIA were able to reframe their own claims in legal and historical terms that are highly comprehensible for the RCMP as well as federal, territorial and provincial authorities. Although no one can foresee how the RCMP and governments are going to respond to those initiatives, both organisations demonstrated a lot of leadership by undertaking their own inquiry. Will this allow them to get the compensations and apologies they have long been seeking? No one knows and only the future can tell. What we know however is that never before had Inuit organisations been this far to make themselves heard.

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