



Statement of Apology for the Dundas Harbour Relocations



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Elders, youth, and community members,

Inuit history and culture spans long before the arrival of non-Inuit on these lands. As a country, we must recognize that for thousands of years, Inuit have been stewards of the Arctic and its ecosystems, mastering its vast and challenging environments. Your expertise and capabilities have been shaped by the wisdom of Elders, a deep commitment to cultural practices, language, and traditional knowledge systems.

I stand before you today with respect and humility, acknowledging the importance of this moment for all those gathered here. I am here, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to deliver a formal apology to the families impacted by the Tallirutiit/Dundas Harbour relocations.

To the Elders and survivors of the relocations who are with us today—your courage, determination, resilience, and advocacy have brought us to this day. We recognize the strength you have shown over the decades and the effort it has taken to reach this point of acknowledgment. You have carried the weight of these relocations, and your perseverance ensures that these stories and experiences are not forgotten.

We also honor the memory of those who are no longer with us, individuals who endured these hardships but did not live to witness this day of apology. Today's apology is a tribute to them, to their lives, and to the generations who have had the burden of carrying this pain.

The apology and acknowledgment we offer today would not have been possible without the dedication and perseverance of Inuit leaders and advocates. Isaac Shooyook and Lisha Qavavauq first sought justice for the relocatees and their families in 2010, working tirelessly to bring forward the truth of these relocations. Their commitment to truth and justice has paved the way for this apology today, and for that, we express our deep gratitude.

The Government of Canada deeply regrets the decisions that led to your relocations and the suffering that resulted from them. We recognize and acknowledge the profound harm done to your families, your communities, and your way of life.

For taking you from your homes and families, for the hardships you endured, for the displacement and ruptures of kinships with the nuna (land), and for the promises that were broken, we offer our sincerest apology.

We are sorry. Mamianaq.

The Government of Canada took advantage of its dominant position over Inuit living in the Arctic and moved them to further its geopolitical goals without due regard to the desires of the relocatees or impact that the move would have on them. The relocations should not have occurred without the informed consent of those to be moved. Promises that should have been kept were broken. Families were dispersed never to see each other again all in the service of the unspoken intent to secure the Arctic islands to Canada. The relocatees and their families have borne an intergenerational burden, with the impacts of these decisions still deeply felt in the affected community today.

In June 1934, Canada's Department of the Interior announced the Eastern Arctic Patrol's itinerary, which included a stop at Dundas Harbour where the Hudson's Bay Company planned to open what would become Canada's most northerly trading post. At the end of that summer, four Inuit families from Cape

Dorset, now Kinngait, along with their 25 sled dogs, boarded the *Nascopie* and began their journey north to Dundas Harbour. They left their home with the promise that they would be returned to Kinngait in two years.

Upon their arrival at Dundas Harbour, the community faced severe challenges as a result of harsh weather and limited resources posed constant threats to their survival. This was a land unknown to the people moved there. These living conditions further compounded their isolation and hardship. The relocated Kinngait families, who had endured unimaginable hardships, eagerly anticipated their promised return home.

When the *Nascopie* returned to Dundas Harbour in September 1936, the Inuit families were initially overjoyed, looking forward to their return journey home as it was originally promised. However, their hopes were shattered when they learned that instead of returning to Kinngait, they were being relocated again—this time to Arctic Bay on Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island). Inuit were told the relocation would benefit them, but the decision was made without their consent, leading to entirely justified feelings of deep disappointment and unease at being forcefully relocated once more to unfamiliar lands.

Just one year following their arrival in Arctic Bay, in August 1937, three of the Kinngait families were moved yet again, this time to a newly established Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Ross. The relocations, now a recurring pattern, took a devastating toll on the relocated children, youth, and their families. By 1942, many of the original relocatees had died. Those who survived were homesick and deeply isolated. They found themselves in lands where the hunting and fishing practices were unfamiliar, and the environment was harsh and unforgiving. The sense of displacement and loss was overwhelming in ways that no one can truly understand unless it was personally experienced. Inuit were forced to adapt to the new and challenging conditions. The emotional and psychological toll of the constant uprooting was immense, as families faced not only physical hardship but also a deep sense of disconnection.

The Kinngait families continued to express an unwavering desire to return to their home community. Yet, when the decision to close the Fort Ross post was made in 1948, it happened without consulting them. Once again, decisions were made for them. They were offered the choice of moving to Spence Bay (Taloyoak) or returning to Arctic Bay, neither of which addressed their deep longing to return home from where they were taken.

It is clear now that these relocations were driven by a combination of factors: the government's concerns about sovereignty in the Arctic, and the economic interests of the fur trade. We understand better than ever that the power imbalance between the colonial government and its officials meant that participation in the relocation was not voluntary and Inuit were not provided with accurate information to make informed decisions for themselves. What is more, the participants were convinced to participate based upon promises that went unfulfilled.

The consequences of these relocations have been profound. Many of the relocated families faced untold hardships, and the traumas and burdens of their experiences have been passed down through generations. Traditional knowledge systems Inuit had relied on for generations, honed in the distinct ecosystems of their homeland, were ruptured. Displaced from their ancestral lands, families were unable to pass on their rich cultural knowledge to their children and had to adapt to new environments. These experiences, along with countless others, led to widespread suffering, with many struggling with

depression and other mental health challenges. Tragically, many Inuit died prematurely from the heartache, and the yearning to return home remained a constant, unhealed wound.

The trauma from these repeated displacements, combined with the lack of adequate resources and support, created unimaginable barriers and undue hardships for those involved. The process of forced relocation not only disrupted the way of life but also has had lasting impacts on your families and community. Canada is deeply sorry for breaking the promise to return Kinngait families to their home community and for the immense hardship this caused. We are sorry to the descendants of these families, who have relived the trauma that has been passed down through generations. We know that this apology comes far too late as your ancestors who experienced this have almost all passed away. For over eight decades, your community has lived with the consequences of decisions that should never have been made without proper transparency or consent, decisions that tore families from their homes, disrupted cultural practices, and imposed suffering that has echoed across generations. Decisions that were made about Inuit, without Inuit.

We are here today, not to rewrite the past, but to honor your truth, to listen to your stories, and to acknowledge and affirm that what happened to your community members was unjust. Again, we are sorry for the harm caused by these forced relocations. Mamianaq.

This apology is long overdue, but it is a vital part of our shared journey toward healing and reconciliation. It is our opportunity to recognize that in the Government of Canada's relationship with our northern citizens, no decisions should be made about Inuit, without Inuit.

Despite the injustices that your families endured, you have held onto your strength, your language, and your deep connection to the land. The resilience of the relocatees and their descendants is a testament to the power of Inuit culture and the enduring spirit of your people.

Today, we look not only to the past but also to the future. A future shaped by Inuit determination, self-determination, and the strength of your communities. Your knowledge, traditions, and leadership continue to shape the Arctic and ensure a thriving future for generations to come. The legacy of your ancestors lives on in the strength of your youth, in the wisdom of your Elders, and in the bright future that lies ahead.

Qujannamiimmarik. Thank you very much.