

# Reconciliation and the qimmiit

My name is Elaine Benacchio and I am a settler here on Treaty 7 territory. Fleeing war in Ukraine, my grand-parents settled on Treaty 6 territory because they were promised free land. The Canadian government's statements were misleading and Indigenous communities were harmed. As a Social Work student, parent, and New Brighton resident, I know reconciliation for ongoing colonial injustices requires action. The story of the qimmiit is not mine but I share it because I hope by doing so, we can all support the healing of the Inuit people.

Central to Inuit culture and history for countless generations, the sled dogs (qimmiit) were used for travel and harvest, essential to survival. The daily care of sled dogs was a sign of maturity and a healthy team generated respect.

After 1950, the Canadian government moved Inuit communities, who lived over a large area, into a number of small settlements. Contrary to the government's promises, there were few jobs and poor living conditions, putting the people into poverty with limited access to the land that nourished them for countless generations.

The number of qimmiit sharply declined between 1957 and 1975 due to the spread of diseases while living in close proximity to others in the settlements. Some teams were abandoned when owners had to work full-time jobs or move away due to medical issues. The RCMP, who did not have extensive experience working with dogs, feared they were dangerous, so the officers shot thousands of qimmiit.

The Inuit people want healing and outlined 25 recommendations for action in the Qikiqtani Truth Commission's Final Report. The slaughter of the qimmiit resulted in famine and a loss of culture. The Canadian government has been asked to acknowledge its historical mistakes, strengthen Inuit governance and culture, as well as create healthy communities. Since the QTC's 2013 Final Report, the recommendations have largely been ignored.

**What can we do?  
Read about the Action on the  
Qikiqtani Truth Commission here:**

